


ZJP.328.AA1

E LIBRIS R. ACLAND HOOD.



22502579689



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Wellcome Library

https://archive.org/details/b29012739_0001

R. Oakland Hood

from

Slukey.

Jan 1884. 1885.

STUDIES
OF
THE GREEK POETS

FIRST SERIES

STUDIES
OF THE
GREEK POETS

FIRST SERIES

BY
JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

AUTHOR OF 'SKETCHES IN ITALY AND GREECE'
'RENAISSANCE IN ITALY' ETC.

Im Ganzen Guten Schönen
Resolut zu leben

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1877

[All rights reserved]

Wellcome Library

ZJP.328.AA1

TO

HENRY GRAHAM DAKYNS

I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME, TOGETHER WITH
ITS COMPANION, IN MEMORY OF COMMON
INTERESTS, JOINT STUDIES, AND FOURTEEN
YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERIODS OF GREEK LITERATURE.

	PAGE
Language and Mythology.—The Five Chief Periods of Greek Literature.—The First Period: Homer—Religion and State of the Homeric Age—Achilles and Ulysses.—Second Period: Transition—Breaking up of the Homeric Monarchies—Colonization—the Nomothetæ—Ionians and Dorians—Development of Elegiac, Iambic, Lyric Poetry—Beginning of Philosophy.—Third Period: Athenian Supremacy—Philosophy at Athens—the Fine Arts—the Drama—History—Sparta and Athens—Pericles and Anaxagoras.—Fourth Period: Hegemony of Sparta—Enslavement of Hellas—Demosthenes—Alexander and Achilles—Aristotle—the Hellenization of the East—Menander—the Orators.—Fifth Period: Decline and Decay—Greek Influence upon the World—Alexandria—the Sciences—Theocritus—the University of Athens—Sophistic Literature—Byzantium—Hellas and Christendom.	I

CHAPTER II.

EMPEDOCLES.

The Grandeur of his Fame.—His Versatility of Genius.—His Self-exaltation.—His Mysticism.—His supposed Miracles.—Legends about his Death.—His Political Action.—His Poems.—Estimation in which the Ancients held them.—Their Prophetic Fervour.—Belief in Metempsychosis.—Purifying Rites.—Contempt for the Knowledge of the Senses.—Physical Theories.—The Poem on Nature.—The Four Elements.—The Sphærus.—Love and Discord.—The Eclecticism of Empedocles	38
--	----

CHAPTER III.

THE GNOMIC POETS.

PAGE

Definition of the term Gnostic.—The Elegiac Metre.—The Age of the Despots in Greece.—Three Periods in Elegiac Poetry : the Martial, the Erotic, the Gnostic.—Callinus.—Tyrtaeus.—Mimnermus.—His Epicurean Philosophy of Life.—Solon.—The Salaminian Verses.—Doctrine of Hereditary Guilt.—Greek Melancholy.—Phocylides. — His Bourgeois Intellect. — Xenophanes.—Theognis.—The Politics of Megara.—Cyrnus.—Precepts upon Education and Conduct in Public and Private Life.—The Biography of Theognis.—Dorian Clubs.—Lamentations over the Decay of Youth and Beauty	67
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE SATIRISTS.

Invention of the Iambic Metre.—Archilochus.—His Parentage and Life.—His Fame among the Ancients.—Ancient and Modern Modes of judging Artists.—The Originality of Archilochus as a Poet.—Simonides of Amorgos.—His Satire on Women.—The Ionian Contempt for Women.—Hipponax.—Limping Iambics.—Differences between the Satire of the Greeks and Romans.	104
--	-----

CHAPTER V.

THE LYRIC POETS.

The Æsthetic Instinct of the Greeks in their Choice of Metres.—Different Species of Lyrical Poetry.—The Fragments in Bergk's Collection.—Proemia.—Prosodia.—Parthenia.—Pæan.—Hyporchem. — Dithyramb. — Phallic Hymn. — Epinikia. — Threnoi. — Scolia. — Æolian and Dorian Lyrists. — The Flourishing Period of Lesbos.—Sappho.—Alcæus.—Anacreon.—Nationality of the Dorian Lyrists.—Spartan Education.—Alcman.—Arion.—Stesichorus.—Ibycus.—Simonides.—Greek Troubadours.—Style of Simonides.—Pindar.	117
---	-----

CHAPTER VI.

PINDAR.

	PAGE
His Life.—Legends connected with him.—The Qualities of his Poetry.—The Olympic Games.—Pindar's Professional Character.—His Morality.—His Religious Belief.—Doctrine of a Future State.—Rewards and Punishments.—The Structure of his Odes.—The Proemia to his Odes.—His Difficulty and Tumidity of Style	165

CHAPTER VII.

GREEK TRAGEDY AND EURIPIDES.

Two Conditions for the development of a National Drama.—The Attic audience.—The Persian War.—Nemesis the cardinal idea of Greek Tragedy.—Traces of the doctrine of Nemesis in early Greek Poetry.—The fixed material of Greek Tragedy.—Athens in the age of Euripides.—Changes introduced by him in Dramatic Art.—The law of progress in all art.—Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides.—The treatment of <i>εὐψυχία</i> by Euripides.—Menoikeus.—The death of Eteocles and Polynices.—Polyxena.—Medea.—Hippolytus.—Electra and Orestes.—Injustice done to Euripides by recent critics	196
---	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

ARISTOPHANES.

Heine's critique on Aristophanes.—Aristophanes as a poet of the fancy.—The nature of his comic grossness.—Greek Comedy in its relation to the worship of Dionysus.—Greek acceptance of the animal conditions of humanity.—His Burlesque, Parody, Southern sense of Fun.—Aristophanes and Menander.—His greatness as a Poet.—Glimpses of pathos.—His Conservatism and serious aim.—Socrates, Agathon, Euripides.—German critics of Aristophanes.—Ancient and Modern Comedy.—The <i>Birds</i> .—The <i>Clouds</i> .—Greek youth and education.—The Allegories of Aristophanes.—The <i>Thesmophoriazusæ</i> .—Aristophanes and Plato.	245
---	-----

CHAPTER IX.

ANCIENT AND MODERN TRAGEDY.

Greek Tragedy and the rites of Dionysus.—A sketch of its origin and history.—The Attic Theatre.—The actors and their masks.—Relation of Sculpture to the Drama in Greece.—The legends used by the Attic tragedians.—Modern liberty in the choice of subjects.—Mystery Plays.—Nemesis.—Modern Tragedy has no religious idea.—Tragic Irony.—Aristotle's definition of Tragedy.—Modern Tragedy offers no *κἀθαρσις* of the passions.—Destinies and Characters.—Female Characters.—The Supernatural.—French Tragedy.—Five Acts.—Bloodshed.—The Unities.—Radical differences in the spirit of ancient and modern art. 289

CHAPTER X.

THE IDYLLISTS.

Theocritus.—His Life.—The Canon of his Poems.—The meaning of the word Idyll.—Bucolic Poetry in Greece, Rome, Modern Europe.—The Scenery of Theocritus.—Relation of Southern Nature to Greek Mythology and Greek Art.—Rustic Life and Superstitions.—Feeling for Pure Nature in Theocritus.—How distinguished from the same feeling in Modern Poets.—Galatea. — Pharmaceutria. — Hylas. — Greek Chivalry.—The Dioscuri.—Thalysia.—Bion.—The Lament for Adonis.—Moschus.—Europa.—Megara.—Lament for Bion.—The debts of Modern Poets to the Idyllists. 316

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANTHOLOGY.

The history of its Compilation.—Collections of Meleager, Philippus, Agathias, Cephalas, Planudes.—The Palatine MS.—The Sections of the Anthology.—Dedicatory Epigrams.—Simonides.—Epitaphs: Real and Literary.—Callimachus.—Epigrams on Poets.—Antipater of Sidon.—Hortatory Epigrams.—Palladas.—

Satiric Epigrams.—Lucilius.—Amatory Epigrams.—Meleager, Straton, Philodemus, Antipater, Rufinus, Paulus Silentarius, Agathias, Plato.—Descriptive Epigrams.	PAGE 356
--	-------------

CHAPTER XII.

THE GENIUS OF GREEK ART.

Separation between the Greeks and us.—Criticism.—Nature.—The Olive.—Greek Sculpture.—Greek Sense of Beauty.—Greek Morality.—Greece, Rome, Renaissance, the Modern Spirit.	412
--	-----

APPENDIX.

Sappho's Hymn to Aphrodite.—Desdemona's Death.—Theocritus : Idyll xxix.	439
---	-----

THE GREEK POETS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERIODS OF GREEK LITERATURE.

Language and Mythology.—The Five Chief Periods of Greek Literature.
The First Period : Homer—Religion and State of the Homeric Age—Achilles and Ulysses.—Second Period : Transition—Breaking up of the Homeric Monarchies—Colonization—the Nomothetæ—Ionians and Dorians—Development of Elegiac, Iambic, Lyric Poetry—Beginning of Philosophy.—Third Period : Athenian Supremacy—Philosophy at Athens—the Fine Arts—the Drama—History—Sparta and Athens—Pericles and Anaxagoras.—Fourth Period : Hegemony of Sparta—Enslavement of Hellas—Demosthenes—Alexander and Achilles—Aristotle—the Hellenization of the East—Menander—the Orators.—Fifth Period : Decline and Decay—Greek Influence upon the World—Alexandria—the Sciences—Theocritus—the University of Athens—Sophistic Literature—Byzantium—Hellas and Christendom.

THE most fascinating problems of history are veiled as closely from our curiosity as the statue of Egyptian Isis. Nothing is known for certain about the emergence from primitive barbarism of the great races, or about the determination of national characteristics. Analogies may be adduced from the material world ; but the mysteries of organized vitality remain impenetrable. What made the Jew a Jew, the Greek a Greek, is as unexplained as what daily causes the germs of an oak and of an ash to produce different trees. All we know is that in the womb of the vague and infinitely distant past, the embryos

of races were nourished into form and individuality by means of the unseen cord which attaches man to nature, his primitive mother. But the laws of that rudimentary growth are still unknown ; "the abysmal deeps of Personality" in nations as in men remain unsounded : we cannot even experimentalize upon the process of ethnical development.

Those mighty works of art which we call languages, in the construction of which whole peoples unconsciously co-operated, the forms of which were determined not by individual genius, but by the instincts of successive generations acting to one end inherent in the nature of the race :—those poems of pure thought and fancy, cadenced not in words but in living imagery, fountain-heads of inspiration, mirrors of the mind of nascent nations, which we call Mythologies :—these surely are more marvellous in their infantine spontaneity than any more mature production of the races which evolved them. Yet we are utterly ignorant of their embryology : the true science of Origins is as yet not even in its cradle.

Experimental philologists may analyze what remains of early languages, may trace their connections and their points of divergence, may classify and group them. But the nature of the organs of humanity which secreted them is unknown, the problem of their vital structure is insoluble. Antiquarian theorists may persuade us that Myths are decayed, disintegrated, dilapidated phrases, the meaning of which had been lost to the first mythopœists. But they cannot tell us how these splendid flowers, springing upon the rich soil of rotting language, expressed in form and colour to the mental eye the thoughts and aspirations of whole races, and presented a measure of the faculties to be developed during long ages of expanding civilization. If the boy is father of the man, Myths are the parents of philosophies, religions, polities.

To those unknown artists of the prehistoric age, to the language-builders and myth-makers, architects of cathedrals

not raised with hands but with the Spirit of man for Humanity to dwell therein, poets of the characters of nations, sculptors of the substance of the very soul, melodists who improvised the themes upon which subsequent centuries have written variations, we ought to erect our noblest statues and our grandest temples. The work of these first artificers is more astonishing in its unconsciousness, more effective in its spontaneity, than are the deliberate and calculated arts of sculptor, painter, poet, philosopher, and lawgiver of the historic periods.

Some such reflections as these are the natural prelude to the study of a literature like that of the Greeks. Language and Mythology form the vestibules and outer courts to Homer, Pheidias, Lycurgus.

It is common to divide the history of Greek literature into three chief periods: the first embracing the early growth of Poetry and Prose before the age in which Athens became supreme in Hellas—that is, anterior to about 480 B.C.: the second coinciding with the brilliant maturity of Greek genius during the supremacy of Athens—that is, from the termination of the Persian war to the age of Alexander: the third extending over the Decline and Fall of the Greek spirit after Alexander's death—that is, from B.C. 323, and onwards, to the final extinction of Hellenic civilization. There is much to be said in favour of this division. Indeed, Greek history falls naturally into these three sections. But a greater degree of accuracy may be attained by breaking up the first and last of these divisions, so as to make five periods instead of three. After having indicated these five periods in outline, we will return to the separate consideration of them in detail and in connection with the current of Greek history.

The first may be termed the Heroic, or Prehistoric, or Legendary period. It ends with the first Olympiad, B.C. 776, and its chief monuments are the epics of Homer and Hesiod. The second is a period of transition from the Heroic or Epical

to that of artistic maturity in all the branches of literature. In this stage history, properly so-called, begins. The Greeks try their strength in several branches of composition. Lyrical, Satirical, Moral, and Philosophical poetry supplant the Epic. Prose is cultivated. The first foundations of the Drama are laid. The earliest attempts at science emerge from the criticism of old mythologies. The whole mind of the race is in a ferment, and, for the moment, effort and endeavour are more apparent than mastery and achievement. This period extends from B.C. 776 to B.C. 477, the date of the Athenian league. The third period is that of the Athenian Supremacy. Whatever is great in Hellas is now concentrated upon Athens. Athens, after her brilliant activity during the Persian war, wins the confidence and assumes the leadership of Greece. Athens is the richest, grandest, most liberal, most cultivated, most enlightened state of Hellas. To Athens flock all the poets and historians and philosophers. The Drama attains maturity in her theatre. Philosophy takes its true direction from Anaxagoras and Socrates. The ideal of history is realized by Thucydides. Oratory flourishes under the great statesmen and the demagogues of the Republic. During the brief but splendid ascendancy of Athens, all the masterpieces of Greek literature are simultaneously produced with marvellous rapidity. Fixing 413 B.C. as the date of the commencement of Athenian Decline, our fourth period, which terminates in B.C. 323 with the death of Alexander, is again one of transition. The second period was transitional from adolescence to maturity. The fourth is transitional from maturity to old age. The creative genius of the Greeks is now less active. We have indeed the great names of Plato, Aristotle, and Demosthenes, to give splendour to this stage of national existence. But the sceptre has passed away from the Greek nation proper. Their protagonist, Athens, is in slavery. The civilization which they had slowly matured, and which at Athens had

been reflected in the masterpieces of Art and Literature, is now spread abroad and scattered over the earth. Asia and Egypt are Hellenized. The Greek spirit is less productive than it has been ; but it is not less vigorous. It still asserts itself as the greatest in the world ; but it does so, relying more upon its past acquirements than on any seeds of power that remain to be developed in the future. The fifth period, the longest of all, is one of decline and decay. It extends from B.C. 323 to the final extinction of classical civilization. Two chief centres occupy our attention—Athens, where the traditions of art and philosophy yet linger, where the Stoics and Epicureans and the sages of the New Academy still educate the world and prepare a *nidus* for the ethics of Christianity—and Alexandria, where physical science is cultivated under the Ptolemies, where mystical theology flourishes in the schools of the Neoplatonists, where libraries are formed and the labour of literary criticism is conducted on a gigantic scale, but where nothing new is produced except the single, most beautiful flower of Idyllic poetry and some few epigrams. In this fifth period, Rome and Byzantium, where the Greek spirit, still vital, over-lives its natural decay upon a foreign soil, close the scene.

In these five periods—periods of superb adolescence, early manhood, magnificent maturity, robust old age, and senility—we can trace the genius of the Greeks putting forth its vigour in successive works of art and literature, concentrating its energy at first upon its own self-culture, then extending its influence in every direction, and controlling the education of humanity, finally contenting itself with pondering and poring on its past, with mystical metaphysics and pedantic criticism. Yet even in its extreme decadence the Hellenic spirit is still potent. It still assimilates, transmutes, and alchemizes what it works upon. Coming into contact with the new and mightier genius of Christianity, it forces even

that first-born of the Deity to take form from itself. One dying effort of the Greek intellect, if we may so speak, is to formulate the dogma of the Trinity and to impress the doctrine of the Logos upon the author of the Gospel of St. John. The analogy between the history of a race so undisturbed in its development as the Greek, and the life of a man, is not altogether fanciful. A man like Goethe, beautiful in soul and body, exceedingly strong and swift and active and inquisitive in all the movements of his spirit, first lives the life of the senses and of physical enjoyment. His soul, "immersed in rich fore-shadowings of the world," has scarcely begun to think consciously in the first period. But he feels the glory of existence, the strivings of inexhaustible energy, the desire of infinite expansion. The second period is one of *Sturm und Drang*. New things are learned: much of the beautiful physical activity is sacrificed; he discovers that life involves care and responsibility as well as pleasure; he concentrates his mental faculty on hard and baffling study, in which at first he halts and falters. Then he goes forth to the world and wins great fame, and does the deeds and thinks the thoughts by which he shall be known to all posterity. His physical and mental faculties are now in perfect harmony; together they offer him the noblest and most enduring pleasures. But after a while his productiveness begins to dwindle. He has put forth his force, has fully expressed himself, has matured his principles, has formed his theory of the world. Our fourth period corresponds to the early old age of such a man's life. He now applies his principles, propagates his philosophy, subordinates his fancy, produces less, enjoys with more sobriety and less exhilaration, bears burdens, suffers disappointments, yet still, as Solon says, "learns always as he grows in years." Then comes the fifth stage. He who was so vigorous and splendid, now has but little joy in physical life; his brain is dry and withering; he dwells on his old thoughts, and has no

faculty for generating new ones : yet his soul contains deep mines of wisdom ; he gives counsel and frames laws for younger generations. And so he gradually sinks into the grave. His acts remain : his life is written.

The great name of Homer covers the whole of the first period of Greek Literature.* It is from the Homeric poems alone that we can form a picture to our imagination of the state of society in prehistoric Hellas. The picture which they present is so lively in its details, and so consistent in all its parts, that we have no reason to suspect that it was drawn from fancy. Its ideal, as distinguished from merely realistic, character is obvious. The poet professes to sing to us of heroes who were of the seed of gods, whose strength exceeded tenfold the strength of actual men, and who filled the world with valiant deeds surpassing all that their posterity achieved. Yet, in spite of this, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* may be taken as faithful mirrors of a certain phase of Greek society, just as the *Nibelungen Lied*, the romances of Charlemagne, and the tales of the Round Table reflect three stages in the history of feudalism. We find that in this earliest period of Greek history the nation was governed by monarchs each of whom claimed descent from a god. Thus the kings exercised their power over the people by divine right ; but at the same time a necessary condition of their maintaining this supremacy was that they should be superior in riches, lands, personal bravery, and wisdom. Their subjects obeyed them, not merely because they were *Διογενεῖς*, or because they were Fathers of the people, but also, and chiefly, because they were the ablest men, the men fitted by nature to rule, the men who could be depended upon in an emergency. The king had just so much personal authority as he had ability to acquire or to assert. As soon as this ability failed, the sceptre departed

* My special debt to Hegel's *Philosophy of History* in this paragraph ought to be acknowledged.

from him. Thus Laertes overlives his royalty ; and the suitors of Penelope, fancying that Ulysses is dead, take no heed of Telemachus, who ought to rule in his stead, because Telemachus is a mere lad ; but as soon as the hero returns, and proves his might by stringing the bow, the suitors are slain like sheep. Again, Achilles, while acknowledging the sway of Agamemnon, quarrels with him openly, proving his equality and right to such independence as he can assert for himself. The bond between the king in the Heroic age and his chieftains was founded on the personal superiority of the suzerain, and upon the necessity felt for the predominance of one individual in warfare and council. The chiefs were grouped around the monarch like the twelve peers round Charlemagne, or like the barons, whose turbulence Shakspeare has described in *Richard II.* The relation of the Homeric sovereign to his princes was, in fact, a feudal one. Olympus repeats the same form of government. There Zeus is monarch simply because he wields the thunder. When Heré wishes to rebel, Hephæstus advises her to submit, because Zeus can root up the world, or hurl them all from the crystal parapet of heaven. Such, then, is the society of kings and princes in Homer. They stand forth in brilliant relief against the background, grey and misty, of the common people. The masses of the nation, like the Chorus in Tragedy, kneel passive, deedless, appealing to heaven, trembling at the strokes of fate, watching with anxiety the action of the heroes. Meanwhile the heroes enact their drama for themselves. They assume responsibility. They do and suffer as their passions sway them. Of these the greatest, the most truly typical, is Achilles. In Achilles, Homer summed up and fixed for ever the ideal of the Greek character. He presented an imperishable picture of their national youthfulness, and of their ardent genius, to the Greeks. The "beautiful human heroism" of Achilles, his strong personality, his fierce passions controlled and tempered

by divine wisdom, his intense friendship and love that passed the love of women, above all, the splendour of his youthful life in death made perfect, hovered like a dream above the imagination of the Greeks, and insensibly determined their subsequent development. At a later age this ideal was destined to be realised in Alexander. The reality fell below the ideal: for *rien n'est si beau que la fable, si triste que la vérité*. But the life of Alexander is the most convincing proof of the importance of Achilles in the history of the Greek race.*

If Achilles be the type of the Hellenic genius, radiant, adolescent, passionate; as it still dazzles us in its artistic beauty and unrivalled physical energy; Ulysses is no less a true portrait of the Greek as known to us in history—stern in action, ruthless in his hatred, pitiless in his hostility; subtle, vengeful, cunning; yet at the same time the most adventurous of men, the most persuasive in eloquence, the wisest in counsel, the bravest and coolest in danger. The *Græculus esuriens* of Juvenal may be said to be the caricature in real life of the idealized Ulysses. And what remains to the present day of the Hellenic genius in the so-called *Greek nation* descends from Ulysses rather than Achilles. If the Homeric Achilles has the superiority of sculpturesque and dramatic splendour, the Homeric Ulysses beats him on the ground of permanence of type.

Homer, then, was the Poet of the Heroic age, the Poet of Achilles and Ulysses. Of Homer we know nothing, we have heard too much. Need we ask ourselves again the question whether he existed, or whether he sprang into the full possession of consummate art without a predecessor? That he had no predecessors, no scattered poems and ballads to build upon, no well-digested body of myths to synthesize, is an absurd hypothesis which the whole history of literature refutes. That, on the other hand, there never was a Homer,—

* In my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets* I have devoted a separate chapter to the character of Achilles.

that is to say, that some diaskeuast, acting under the orders of Pisistratus, gave its immortal outline to the colossus of the *Iliad*, and wove the magic web of the *Odyssey*—but that no supreme and conscious artist working toward a well-planned conclusion conceived and shaped these epics to the form they bear, appears to the spirit of sound criticism equally ridiculous. The very statement of this alternative involves a contradiction in terms ; for such a diaskeuast must himself have been a supreme and conscious artist. Some Homer did exist. Some great single poet intervened between the lost chaos of legendary material and the cosmos of artistic beauty which we now possess. His work may have been tampered with in a thousand ways, and religiously but inadequately restored. Of his age and date and country we may know nothing. But this we do *know*, that the fire of moulding, fusing, and controlling genius in some one single brain has made the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* what they are.

The Epic poet merges his personality in his poems, the words of which he ascribes to the inspiration of the Muse. The individual is nowhere, is forgotten in the subject and suppressed, while the luminous forms of gods and heroes move serenely across the stage, summoned and marshalled by the maidens of Helicon. In no other period of Greek literature shall we find the same unconsciousness of self, the same immersion in the work of Art. In this respect the poetry of the Heroic age answers to the condition of pre-historic Hellas, where as yet the elements of the Greek race remain still implicit in the general mass and undeveloped. We hear in Homer of no abrupt division between Dorians and Ionians. Athens and Sparta have not grown up into prominence as the two leaders of the nation. Argos is the centre of power ; but Phthiotis, the cradle of the Hellenes, is the home of Achilles. Ulysses is an islander. In the same way, in Homer the art of the Greeks is still

a mere potentiality. The artistic sentiment, indeed, exists in exquisite perfection; but it is germinal, not organized and expanded as it will be. We hear of embroidery for royal garments, of goldsmith's work for shields and breast-plates, of stained ivory trappings for chariots and horses. But even here the poet's imagination had probably outrun the fact. What he saw with his fancy, could the heroic artisans have fashioned with their tools? Is not the shield of Achilles, like Dante's pavement of the Purgatorial staircase, a forecast of the future? Architecture and Sculpture at any rate can scarcely be said to exist. Ulysses builds his own house. The statues of the gods are fetishes. But, meanwhile, the foundation of the highest Greek art is being laid in the cultivation of the human body. The sentiment of beauty shows itself in dances and games, in the races of naked runners, in rhythmic processions, and the celebration of religious rites. This was the proper preparation for the after-growth of Sculpture. The whole race lived out its sculpture and its painting, rehearsed, as it were, the great works of Pheidias and Polygnotus in physical exercise before it learned to express itself in marble or in colour. The public games, which were instituted in this first period, further contributed to the cultivation of the sense of Beauty, which was inherent in the Greeks.

The second period is one of transition—in Politics, in Literature, in the Fine Arts. Everywhere the old landmarks are being broken up, and the new ones are not yet fixed. The Heroic monarchies yield first of all to oligarchies, and then to tyrannies; the tyrannies in their turn give place to democracies, or to constitutional aristocracies. Argos, the centre of Heroic Hellas, is the first to change. Between 770 and 730 B.C. Pheidon usurps the sovereign power, and dies, leaving no dynasty behind him.* Between 650 and 500

* The date of Pheidon is in truth unfixed. According to recent calculations, he may have celebrated the 28th and not the 8th Olympiad.

we find despots springing up in all the chief Greek cities. At Corinth the oligarchical family of the Bacchiadæ are superseded by the tyrants Cypselus and Periander. At Megara the despot Theagenes is deposed and exiled. At Sicyon the Orthagoridæ terminate in the despot Cleisthenes, whose reign is marked by an attempt to supersede the ancient Doric order of government by caste. At Mitylene, Pittacus becomes a constitutional autocrat, or dictator for the public safety. At Samos, Polycrates holds a post of almost Oriental despotism. At Athens, we find the great family of the Pisistratidæ, who supersede the dynastic tyranny in commission of the house of Codrus. What is the meaning of these changes? How does the despot differ from the Heroic monarch, who held, as we have seen, his power by divine right, but who also had to depend for his ascendancy on personal prowess? Gradually the old respect for the seed of Zeus died out. Either the royal families abused their power, or became extinct, or, as in the case of Athens and Sparta, retained hereditary privileges under limitations. During this decay of the Zeus-born dynasties, the cities of Greece were a prey to the quarrels of great families; and it often happened that one of these obtained supreme power—in which case a monarchy, based not on divine right, but on force and fear, was founded: or else a few of the chief houses combined against the State, to establish an oligarchy. The oligarchies, owing their authority to no true, legal, or religious fount of honour, were essentially selfish, and were exposed to the encroachments of the more able among their own families. The cleverest man in an oligarchy tended to draw the power into his own hands; but in this he generally succeeded by first flattering, and then intimidating the people. Thus in one way or another the old type of dynastic government was superseded by despotisms, The involved alteration in his date would bring him into closer connection with the other despots.

more or less arbitrary, tending to the tyranny of single individuals, or to the coalition of noble houses, and bringing with them the vices of greed, craft, and servile cruelty. The political ferment caused a vast political excitement. Party strove against party; and when one set gained the upper hand, the other had to fly. The cities of Hellas were filled with exiles. Diplomacy and criticism occupied the minds of men. Personal cleverness became the one essential point in politics. But two permanent advantages were secured by this anarchy to the Greeks. The one was a strong sense of the equality of citizens; the other a desire for established law, as opposed to the caprice of individuals and to the clash of factions in the State. This then is the first point which marks the transitional period. The old monarchies break up, and give place to oligarchies first, and then to despotism. The tyrants maintain themselves by violence and by flattering the mob. At last they fall, or are displaced, and then the states agree to maintain their freedom by the means of constitutions and fixed laws. The despots are schoolmasters, who bring the people to *Nomos* as their lord.

Three other general features distinguish this period of transition. The first is Colonisation. In the political disturbances which attend the struggle for power, hundreds of citizens were forced to change their residence. So we find the mother cities sending settlers to Italy, to Sicily, to Africa, to the Gulf of Lyons, to Thrace, and to the islands. In these colonies the real life and vigour of Hellas show themselves at this stage more than in the mother states. It is in Sicily, on the coast of Magna Græcia, on the sea-board of Asia Minor, in the islands of the Ægean, that the first poets and philosophers and historians of Greece appear. Sparta and Athens, destined to become the protagonists of the real drama of Hellas, are meanwhile silent and apparently inert. Secondly, this is the age of the Nomothetæ. Thebes receives a constitution from

the Corinthian lovers and lawgivers Philolaus and Diocles. Lycurgus and Solon form the states of Sparta and Athens. It is not a little wonderful to think of these three great cities, successively the leaders of historic Hellas, submitting to the intellect each of its own lawgiver, taking shape beneath his hands, cheerfully accepting and diligently executing his directions. Lastly, it is in this period that the two chief races of the Greeks—the Ionians and the Dorians—emerge into distinctness. Not only are Athens and Sparta fashioned to the form which they will afterwards maintain ; but also in the colonies two distinct streams of thought and feeling begin to flow onwards side by side, and to absorb, each into its own current, those minor rivulets which it could best appropriate.

What happens to literature in this period of metamorphosis, expansion, and anarchy? We have seen that Homer covers the whole of the first period of literature ; and in the Homeric poems we saw that the interests of the present were subordinated to a splendid picture of the ideal past, that the poet was merged in his work, that the individual joys and sorrows of the artist remained unspoken, and that his words were referred immediately to the Muse. All this is now to be altered. But meanwhile between the first and second period a link is made by Hesiod. In his *Works and Days* he still preserves the traditions of the Epic. But we no longer listen to the deeds of gods and heroes ; and though the Muse is invoked, the poet appears before us as a living, sentient, suffering man. We descend to earth. We are instructed in the toils and duties of the beings who have to act and endure upon the prosaic stage of the world, as it exists in the common light of the present time. Even in Hesiod there has therefore been a change. Homer strung his lyre in the halls of princes who loved to dwell on the great deeds of their god-descended ancestors. Hesiod utters a weaker and more subdued note to the tillers of the ground and the watchers of the seasons. In Homer we

see the radiant heroes expiring with a smile upon their lips as on the Æginetan pediment. In Hesiod we hear the low sad outcry of humanity. The inner life, the daily loss and profit, the duties and the cares of men are his concern. Homer too was never analytical. He described the world without raising a single moral or psychological question. Hesiod poses the eternal problems : What is the origin and destiny of mankind? Why should we toil painfully upon the upward path of virtue? How came the gods to be our tyrants? What is Justice? How did evil and pain and disease begin? After Hesiod the Epical impulse ceases. Poets indeed go on writing narrative poems in hexameters. But the Cycle, so called by the Alexandrian critics, produced about this time, had not innate life enough to survive the wear and tear of centuries. We have lost the whole series, except in the tragedies which were composed from their materials. Literature had passed beyond the stage of the heroic Epic. The national ear demanded other and more varied forms of verse than the hexameter. Among the Ionians of Asia Minor was developed the pathetic melody of the Elegiac metre, which first apparently was used to express the emotions of love and sorrow, and afterwards came to be the vehicle of moral sentiment and all strong feeling. Callinus and Tyrtæus adapted the Elegy to songs of battle. Solon consigned his wisdom to its couplets, and used it as a trumpet for awakening the zeal of Athens against her tyrants. Mimnermus confined the metre to its more plaintive melodies, and made it the mouthpiece of lamentations over the fleeting beauty of youth and the evils of old age. In Theognis the Elegy takes wider scope. He uses it alike for satire and invective, for precept, for autobiographic grumblings, for political discourses, and for philosophical apophthegms. Side by side with the Elegy arose the various forms of Lyric poetry. The names of Alcæus and Sappho, of Alcman, Anacreon, Simonides, Bacchylides, Stesichorus, Arion instantly suggest them-

selves. But it must be borne in mind that Lyric poetry in Greece at a very early period broke up into two distinct species. The one kind gave expression to strong personal emotion and became a safety-valve for perilous passions: the other was choric and complex in its form; designed for public festivals and solemn ceremonials, it consisted chiefly of odes sung in the honour of gods and great men. To the former or personal species belong the lyrics of the Ionian and Æolian families: to the latter, or more public species, belong the so-called Dorian odes. Besides the Elegy and all the forms of lyric stanza, the Iambic, if not invented in this period, was now adapted of set purpose to personal satire.* Archilochus is said to have preferred this metre, as being the closest in its form to common speech, and therefore suited to his unideal practical invective. From the lyric Dithyrambs of Arion, sung at festivals of Dionysus, and from the Iambic satires of Archilochus, recited at the feasts of Demeter,† was to be developed the metrical structure of the drama in the third period. As yet, it is only among the Dorians of Sicily and of Megara that we hear of any mimetic shows, and these of the simplest description.

In this period the first start in the direction of philosophy was made. The morality which had been implicit in Homer, and had received a partial development in Hesiod, was condensed in proverbial couplets by Solon, Theognis, Phocylides, and Simonides. These couplets formed the starting-points for discussion. Many of Plato's dialogues turn on sayings of Theognis and Simonides. Many of the sublimer flights of meditation in Sophocles are expansions of early Gnomes. Even the Ethics of Aristotle are indebted to their wisdom.

* The *Margites* and *Eiresione*, attributed by the Greeks to Homer, contain possibly the earliest fragments of Iambic verses.

† Satire, it is well known, was permitted at some of the festivals of Demeter; and the legend of the maid Iambë, who alone could draw a smile from Demeter, after she had lost Persephone, seems to symbolize the connection of Iambic recitations with the cultus of this goddess.

The ferment of thought produced by the political struggles of this age tended to sharpen the intellect and to turn reflection inwards. Hence we find that the men who rose to greatest eminence in statecraft as tyrants or as lawgivers, are also to be reckoned among the primitive philosophers of Greece. The aphorisms of the Seven Sages, two of whom were Nomothetæ, and several of whom were despots, contain the kernel of much that is peculiar in Greek thought. It is enough to mention these : *μηδὲν ἄγαν μέτρον ἄριστον· γινῶθι σεαυτόν· καιρὸν γινῶθι ἀνάγκη δ' οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται*, which are the germs of subsequent systems of ethics, metaphysics, and theories of art.* Solon, as a patriot, a modeller of the Athenian constitution, an elegiac poet, one of the Seven Sages, and the representative of Greece at the court of Cræsus, may be chosen as the one most eminent man in a period when literature and thought and politics were to a remarkable extent combined in single individuals.

Meanwhile philosophy began to flourish in more definite shape among the colonists of Asia Minor, Italy, and Sicily. The criticism of the Theogony of Hesiod led the Ionian thinkers, Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximander, Heraclitus, to evolve separate answers to the question of the origin of the universe. The problem of the physical ἀρχή, or starting point, of the world occupied their attention. Some more scientific theory of existence than mythology afforded was imperatively demanded. The same spirit of criticism, the same demand for accuracy, gave birth to history. The Theogony of Hesiod and the Homeric version of the Trojan war, together with the genealogies of the Heroes, were reduced to simple statements of fact, stripped of their artistic trappings, and rationalized after a rude and simple fashion by the annalists of Asia Minor. This zeal for greater rigour of thought was instrumental in

* Nothing overmuch : measure is best : know thyself : know the right moment : against necessity not even gods fight.

developing a new vehicle of language. The time had come at length for separation from poetry, for the creation of a prose style which should correspond in accuracy to the logical necessity of exact thinking. Prose accordingly was elaborated with infinite difficulty by these first speculators from the elements of common speech. It was a great epoch in the history of European culture when men ceased to produce their thoughts in the fixed cadences of verse, and consigned them to the more elastic periods of prose. Heraclitus of Ephesus was the first who achieved a notable success in this new and difficult art. He for his pains received the title of ὁ σκοτεινός, the obscure ; so strange and novel did the language of science seem to minds accustomed hitherto to nothing but metre. Yet even after his date philosophy of the deepest species was still conveyed in verse. The Eleatic metaphysicians Xenophanes and Parmenides—Xenophanes, who dared to criticise the anthropomorphism of the Greek Pantheon, and Parmenides, who gave utterance to the word of Greek ontology, τὸ ὄν, or Being, which may be significantly contrasted with the Hebrew I am—wrote long poems in which they invoked the Muse, and dragged the hexameter along the pathway of their argument upon the entities, like a pompous sacrificial vestment. Empedocles of Agrigentum, to whom we owe the rough and ready theory of the four elements, cadenced his great work on Nature in the same sonorous verse, and interspersed his speculations on the Cycles of the Universe with passages of brilliant eloquence.

Thus the second period is marked alike by changes in politics and society, and by a revolution in the spirit of literature. The old Homeric monarchies are broken up. Oligarchies and tyrannies take their place. To the anarchy and unrest of transition succeeds the demand for constitutional order. The colonies are founded, and contain the very pith of Hellas at this epoch : of all the great names we have mentioned, only Solon and Theognis belong to Central Greece. The Homeric

Epos has become obsolete. In its stead we have the greatest possible variety of literary forms. The Elegiac poetry of morality and war and love; the Lyrical poetry of personal feeling and of public ceremonial; the Philosophical poetry of metaphysics and mysticism; the Iambic, with its satire; Prose, in its adaptation to new science and a more accurate historical investigation; are all built up upon the ruins of the Epic. What is most prominent in the spirit of this second period is the emergence of private interests and individual activities. No dreams of a golden past now occupy the minds of men. No gods or heroes fill the canvas of the poet. Man, his daily life, his most crying necessities, his deepest problems, his loves and sorrows, his friendships, his social relations, his civic duties—these are the theme of poetry. Now for the first time in Europe a man tells his own hopes and fears, and expects the world to listen. Sappho simply sings her love; Archilochus, his hatred; Theognis, his wrongs; Mimnermus, his *ennui*; Alcæus, his misfortunes; Anacreon, his pleasure of the hour; and their songs find an echo in all hearts. The Individual and the Present have triumphed over the Ideal and the Past. Finally, it should be added that the chief contributions to the culture of the fine arts in this period are Architecture, which is carried to perfection; Music, which receives elaborate form in the lyric of the Dorian order; and Sculpture, which appears as yet but rudimentary upon the pediments of the temples of Ægina and Selinus.

Our third period embraces the supremacy of Athens from the end of the Persian to the end of the Peloponnesian war. It was the struggle with Xerxes which developed all the latent energies of the Greeks, which intensified their national existence, and which secured for Athens, as the central power on which the scattered forces of the race converged, the intellectual dictatorship of Hellas. No contest equals for interest and for importance this contest of the Greeks with the Persians. It

was a struggle of spiritual energy against brute force, of liberty against oppression, of intellectual freedom against superstitious ignorance, of civilization against barbarism. The whole fate of humanity hung trembling in the scales at Marathon, at Salamis, at Plataea. On the one side were ranged the hordes of Asia, tribe after tribe, legion upon legion, myriad by myriad, under their generals and princes. On the other side stood forth a band of athletes, of Greek citizens, each one himself a prince and general. The countless masses of the herd-like Persian host were opposed to a handful of resolute men in whom the force of the spirit of the world was concentrated. The triumph of the Greeks was the triumph of the spirit, of the intellect of man, of light dispersing darkness, of energy repelling a dead weight of matter. Other nations have shown a temper as heroic as the Greeks. The Dutch, for instance, in their resistance against Philip, or the Swiss in their antagonism to Burgundy and Austria. But in no other single instance has heroism been exerted on so large a scale, in such a fateful contest for the benefit of mankind at large. Had the Dutch, for example, been quelled by Spain, or the Swiss been crushed by the House of Hapsburg, the world could have survived the loss of these athletic nations. There were other mighty peoples, who held the torch of liberty and of the spirit, and who were ready to carry it onward in the race. But if Persia had overwhelmed the Greeks upon the plains of Marathon or in the straits of Salamis, that torch of spiritual liberty would have been extinguished. There was no runner in the race to catch it up from the dying hands of Hellas, and to bear it forward for the future age. No : this contest of the Greeks with Persia was the one supreme battle of history; and to the triumph of the Greeks we owe whatever is most great and glorious in the subsequent achievements of the human race.

Athens rose to her full height in this duel. She bore the brunt of Marathon alone. Her generals decided the sea-fight

of Salamis. For the Spartans it remained to defeat Mardonius at Plataea. Consequently the olive-wreath of this more than Olympian victory crowned Athens. Athens was recognized as Saviour and Queen of Hellas. And Athens, who had fought the battle of the Spirit—by Spirit we mean the greatness of the soul, liberty, intelligence, civilization, culture, everything which raises men above brutes and slaves, and makes them free beneath the arch of heaven—Athens who had fought and won this battle of the Spirit, became immediately the recognized impersonation of the Spirit itself. Whatever was superb in human nature found its natural home and sphere in Athens. We hear no more of the colonies. All great works of Art and Literature now are produced in Athens. It is to Athens that the sages come to teach and to be taught. Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, the three masters of philosophy in this third period, are Athenians. It is, however, noticeable and significant that Anaxagoras, who forms a link between the philosophy of the second and third period, is a native of Clazomenae, though the thirty years of his active life are spent at Athens. These thinkers introduce into speculation a new element. Instead of inquiries into the factors of the physical world or of ontological theorizing, they approach all problems which involve the activities of the human soul, the presence in the universe of a controlling Spirit. Anaxagoras issues the famous apophthegm, *νοῦς πάντων κρατεῖ* : “intelligence disposes all things in the world.” Socrates founds his ethical investigation upon the Delphian precept, *γνῶθι σεαυτόν* : or, “the proper study of mankind is man.” Plato, who belongs chronologically to the fourth period, but who may here be mentioned in connection with the great men of the third, as synthesizing all the previous speculations of the Greeks, ascends to the conception of an ideal existence which unites Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in one scheme of universal order.

At the same time Greek art rises to its height of full

maturity. Ictinus designs the Parthenon, and Mnesicles the Propylæa ; Pheidias completes the development of Sculpture in his statue of Athene, his pediment and friezes of the Parthenon, his chryselephantine image of Zeus at Olympia, his marble Nemesis upon the plain of Marathon. These were the ultimate, consummate achievements of the sculptor's skill ; the absolute standards of what the statuary in Greece could do. Nothing remained to be added. Subsequent progression—for a progression there was in the work of Praxiteles—was a deflection from the pure and perfect type.

Poetry, in the same way, receives incomparable treatment at the hands of the great dramatists. As the Epic of Homer contained implicitly all forms of poetry, so did the Athenian Drama consciously unite them in one supreme work of art. The energies aroused by the Persian war had made action and the delineation of action of prime importance to the Greeks. We no longer find the poets giving expression to merely personal feeling, or uttering wise saws and moral precepts, as in the second period. Human emotion is indeed their theme : but it is the phases of passion in living, acting, and conflicting personalities which the Drama undertakes to depict. Ethical philosophy is more than ever substantive in verse : but its lessons are set forth by example and not by precept—they animate the conduct of whole trilogies. The awakened activity of Hellas at this period produced the first great drama of Europe, as the Reformation in England produced the second. The Greek Drama being essentially religious, the tragedians ascended to Mythology for their materials. Homer is dismembered, and his episodes or allusions, together with the substance of the Cyclic poems, supply the dramatist with plots. But notice the difference between Homer and Æschylus, the Epic and the Drama. In the latter we find no merely external delineation of mythical history. The legends are used as outlines to be filled in with living and eternally important details.

The heroes are not interesting merely as heroes, but as the types and patterns of human nature, as representatives on a gigantic scale of that humanity which is common to all men in all ages, and as subject to the destinies which control all human affairs. Mythology has thus become the text-book of life, interpreted by the philosophical consciousness. With the names of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, must be coupled that of Aristophanes. His Comedy is a peculiarly Athenian product—the strongest mixture of paradox and irony and broad buffoonery and splendid poetry, designed to serve a serious aim, the world has ever seen. Here the many-sided, flashing genius of the Ionian race appears in all its subtlety, variety, suppleness, and strength. The free spirit of Athens runs riot and proclaims its liberty by license in the prodigious saturnalia of the wit of Aristophanes.

It remains to be added that to this period belong the histories of Herodotus, the Halicarnassean by birth, who went to Thurii as colonist from Athens, and of Thucydides, the Athenian general; the lyrics of Pindar the Theban, who was made the public guest of Athens; the eloquence of Pericles, and the wit of Aspasia. This brief enumeration suffices to show that in the third period of Greek Literature was contained whatever is most splendid in the achievements of the genius of the Greeks, and that all these triumphs converged and were centred upon Athens.

The public events of this period are summed up in the struggle for supremacy between Athens and Sparta. The race which had shown itself capable of united action against the common foe, now develops within itself two antagonistic and mutually exclusive principles. The age of the despots is past. The flowering-time of the colonies is over. The stone of Tantalus in Persia has been removed from Hellas. But it remains for Sparta and Athens to fight out the duel of Dorian against Ionian prejudices, of Oligarchy against Democracy.

Both states have received their definite stamp, or permanent ἡθος—Sparta from semi-mythical Lycurgus; Athens from Solon, Cleisthenes, and Pericles. Their war is the warfare of the powers of the sea with the powers of the land, of Conservatives with Liberals, of the rigid principle of established order with the expansive spirit of intellectual and artistic freedom. What is called the Peloponnesian war—that internecine struggle of the Greeks—is the historical outcome of this deep-seated antagonism. And the greatest historical narrative in the world, that of Thucydides, is its record. To dwell upon the events of this war would be superfluous. Athens uniformly exhibits herself as a dazzling, brilliant, impatient power, led astray by the desire of novelty, and the intoxicating sense of force in freedom. Sparta proceeds slowly, coldly, cautiously; secures her steps; acts on the defensive; spends no strength in vain; is timid, tentative, and economical of energy; but at the decisive moment she steps in and crushes her antagonist. Deluded by the wandering fire of the inspiration of Alcibiades, the Athenians venture to abandon the policy of Pericles and to contemplate the conquest of Syracuse. A dream of gigantic empire, in harmony with their expansive spirit, but inconsistent with the very conditions of vitality in a Greek state, floated before their imaginations. In attempting to execute it, they over-reached themselves and fell a prey to Sparta. With the fall of Athens, faded the real beauty and grandeur of Greece. Athens had incarnated that ideal of loveliness and sublimity. During her days of prosperity she had expressed it in superb works of art and literature, and in the splendid life of a free people governed solely by their own intelligence. Sparta was strong to destroy this life, to extinguish this light of culture. But to do more she had no strength. Stiffened in her narrow rules of discipline, she was utterly unable to sustain the spiritual vitality of Hellas, or to carry its still vigorous energy into new spheres. It remained for aliens to accomplish this.

Just before passing to the fourth period of comparative decline, we may halt a moment to contemplate the man who represents this age of full maturity. Pericles, called half in derision by the comic poets the Zeus of Athens, called afterwards, with reverence, by Plutarch, the Olympian—Pericles expresses in himself the spirit of this age. He is the typical Athenian, who governed Athens during the years in which Athens governed Greece, who formed the taste of the Athenians at the time when they were educating the world by the production of immortal works of beauty. We have seen that the conquest of the Persians was the triumph of the spirit, and that after the conquest the spirit of humanity found itself for the first time absolutely and consciously free in Athens. This spirit was, so to speak, incarnated in Pericles. The Greek genius was made flesh in him, and dwelt at Athens. In obedience to its dictates, he extended the political liberties of the Athenians to the utmost, while he controlled those liberties with the laws of his own reason. In obedience to the same spirit, he expended the treasures of the Ionian League upon the public works, which formed the subsequent glory of Hellas, and made her august even in humiliation. "That," says Plutarch, "which now is Greece's only evidence that the power she boasts of and her ancient wealth are no romance or idle story, was his construction of the public and sacred buildings." It was, again, by the same inspiration that Pericles divined the true ideal of the Athenian commonwealth. In the Funeral Oration he says : "We love the beautiful, but without ostentation or extravagance ; we philosophise without being seduced into effeminacy : we are bold and daring ; but this energy in action does not prevent us from giving to ourselves a strict account of what we undertake. Among other nations, on the contrary, martial courage has its foundation in deficiency of culture ; we know best how to distinguish between the agreeable and the irksome ; notwithstanding which we do not shrink

from perils." In this panegyric of the national character, Pericles has rightly expressed the real spirit of Athens as distinguished from Sparta. The courage and activity of the Athenians were the result of open-eyed wisdom, and not of mere gymnastic training. Athens knew that the arts of life and the pleasures of the intellect were superior to merely physical exercises, to drill, and to discipline.

While fixing our thoughts upon Pericles as the exponent of the mature spirit of free Hellas, we owe some attention to his master, the great Anaxagoras, who first made Reason play the chief part in the scheme of the universe. Of the relations of Anaxagoras to his pupil Pericles, this is what Plutarch tells us: "He that saw most of Pericles, and furnished him most especially with a weight and grandeur of sense, superior to all arts of popularity, and in general gave him his elevation and sublimity of purpose and of character, was Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ, whom the men of those times called by the name of *Nous*, that is, mind or intelligence; whether in admiration of the great and extraordinary gift he displayed for the science of nature, or because he was the first of the philosophers who did not refer the first ordering of the world to fortune or chance, nor to necessity or compulsion, but to a pure, unadulterated intelligence, which in all other existing mixed and compound things acts as a principle of discrimination, and of combination of like with like." Thus we may say, without mysticism, that at the very moment in history when the intelligence of mankind attained to freedom, there arose a philosopher in Anaxagoras to proclaim the freedom and absolute supremacy of intelligence in the universe; and a ruler in Pericles to carry into action the laws of that intelligence, and to govern the most uncontrollably free of nations by Reason. When Pericles died, Athens lost her Zeus, her head, her real king. She was left a prey to parties, to demagogues, to the cold encroaching policy of Sparta. But Pericles had lived long enough to secure the

immortality of what was greatest in his city, to make of Athens in her beauty "a joy for ever."

"If the army of Nicias had not been defeated under the walls of Syracuse ; if the Athenians had, acquiring Sicily, held the balance between Rome and Carthage, sent garrisons to the Greek colonies in the south of Italy, Rome might have been all that its intellectual condition entitled it to be, a tributary, not the conqueror, of Greece ; the Macedonian power would never have attained to the dictatorship of the civilized states of the world." Such is the exclamation of Shelley over the fall of Athens. But, according to the Greek proverb, to desire impossibilities—in the past as in the present—is a sickness of the soul. No Greek state could have maintained its *ἡθος* while it ruled a foreign empire ; nor is the right to govern measured by merely intellectual capacity. The work of Greece was essentially spiritual and not political. The chief sign of weakness which meets us in the fourth period is in the region of politics. After the humiliation of Athens, Sparta assumed the leadership of Greece. But she shamefully misused her power by betraying the Greek cities of Asia to the Persians, while her generals and harmosts made use of their authority for the indulgence of their private vices. Nothing in the previous training of the Spartan race fitted them for the control of nations with whose more liberal institutions and refined manners they could not sympathize. Their tyranny proved insupportable, and was at last reduced to the dust by the Thebans under Pelopidas and Epaminondas. But Thebes had neither the wealth nor the vigour to administer the government of Hellas. Therefore the Greek states fell into a chaos of discord, without leadership, without a generous spirit of mutual confidence and aid ; while at the same time the power of the Macedonian kingdom was rapidly increasing under the control of Philip. An occasion offered itself to Philip for interfering in the Greek affairs. From that moment forward for

ever the cities of Greece became the fiefs of foreign despots. The occasion in question was a great one. The Phocians had plundered the Delphian temple, and none of the Greeks were strong enough to punish them. The act of the Phocians was parricidal in its sacrilege, suicidal in short-sightedness. Defiling the altar of the ancestral god, on whose oracles the states had hitherto depended for counsel, and destroying, with the sanctity of Delphi, the sacred symbol of Greek national existence, they abandoned themselves to desecration and dishonour. With as little impunity could a king of Judah have robbed the temple and invaded the Holiest of Holies. But neither Spartans, nor Athenians, nor yet Thebans arose to avenge the affront offered to their common nationality. The whole of Greece proper lay paralyzed, and the foreigner stepped in—Philip, whom in their pride they had hitherto called the Barbarian. He took up the cause of Phœbus and punished the children of the Delphian god for their impiety. It was clearly proved to the states of Hellas that their independence was at an end. They submitted. Greece became the passive spectator of the deeds of Macedonia. Hellas, who had been the hero, was now the chorus. It was Alexander of Macedon who played the part of Achilles in her future drama.

One man vindicated the spirit of Greek freedom against this despotism. The genius of Athens, militant once more, but destined not to triumph, incarnates itself in Demosthenes. By dint of eloquence and weight of character he strives to stem the tide of dissolution. But it is in vain. His orations remain as the monuments of a valiant but ineffectual resistance. The old intelligence of Athens shines, nay, fulminates, in these tremendous periods; but it is no longer intelligence combined with power. The sceptre of empire has passed from the hands of the Athenians.

Still, though the states of Greece are humiliated, though we hear no more of Ionians and Dorians, but only of Macedonians,

yet the real force of the Greek race is by no means exhausted in this fourth period. On the contrary, their practical work in the world is just beginning. Under the guidance of Alexander, the Greek spirit conquers and attempts to civilize the East. The parallel between Alexander and Achilles, as before hinted, is more than accidental. Trained in the study of Homer as we are in the study of the Bible, he compared his destinies with those of the great hero, and formed himself upon the type of Pelides. At Troy he pays peculiar reverence to the tomb of Patroclus. He celebrates Hephæstion's death with Homeric games and pyres up-piled to heaven. He carries Homer with him on war-marches, and consults the *Iliad* on occasions of doubt. Alexander's purpose was to fight out to the end the fight begun by Achilles between West and East, and to avenge Greece for the injuries of Asia. But it was not a merely military conquest which he executed. Battles were the means to higher ends. Alexander sought to subject the world to the Greek spirit, to stamp the customs, the thoughts, the language, and the culture of the Greeks upon surrounding nations. Poets and philosophers accompanied his armies. In the deserts of Bactria and Syria and Libya he founded Greek cities. During the few years of his short life he not only swept those continents, but he effaced the past and inaugurated a new state of things throughout them ; so that, in subsequent years, when the Romans, themselves refined by contact with the Greeks, advanced to take possession of those territories, they found their work half done. The alchemizing touch of the Greek genius had transformed languages, cities, constitutions, customs, nay, religions also, to its own likeness. This fourth period, a period of transition from maturity to decay, is the period of Alexander. In it the Greek spirit, which had been gathering strength through so many generations, poured itself abroad over the world. What it lost in intensity and splendour, it gained in extension. It was impossible even

for Greeks, while thus impressing their civilization on the whole earth, to go on increasing in the beauty of their life and art at home.

Some of the greatest names in Art, Philosophy, and Literature still belong to this fourth period. The chief of all is Aristotle, *il maestro di color che sanno*, the absorber of all previous and contemporary knowledge into one coherent system, the legislator for the human intellect through eighteen centuries after his death. It is worth observing that Aristotle, unlike Socrates and Plato, is not a citizen of Athens, but of the small Thracian town Stageira. Thus, at the moment when philosophy lost its essentially Hellenic character and became cosmopolitan in Aristotle, the mantle devolved upon an alien. Again Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander. The two greatest men of the fourth period are thus brought into the closest relations. In pure literature the most eminent productions of this period are the orations of Æschines, Demosthenes, Isocrates; and the comedies of Menander. It is not a little significant that we should have retained no authentic fragment of the speeches of Pericles—except in so far as we may trust Thucydides,—while the studied Rhetoric of these politically far less important orators should have been so copiously preserved. The reign of mere talk was imminent. Oratory was coming to be studied as an art, and practised, not as a potent instrument in politics, but as an end in itself. Men were beginning to think more of how they spoke than of what they might achieve by speaking. Besides, the whole Athenian nation, as dikasts and as ecclesiasts, were interested in Rhetoric. The first masters of eloquence considered as a fine art were therefore idolized. Demosthenes, Æschines, Isocrates, combined the fire of vehement partisans and impassioned politicians with the consummate skill of professional speech-makers. After their days Rhetoric in Greece became a matter of frigid display—an *ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παράχρημα*. In the comedies of

Menander, as far as we may judge of them from fragments and critiques, and from their Latin copies, a very noticeable change in the spirit of literature is apparent. The so-called New Comedy, of which he was the representative, is the product of a meditative and inactive age. The great concerns of the world, and of human life seen in its profoundest depth, which formed the staple of Aristophanes, have been abandoned. We are brought close to domesticities : the events of common life occupy the stage of Menander. The audience of Aristophanes listened with avidity to comedies of which politics upon the grandest scale were the substance. Menander invited his Athenians to the intrigues of young men, slaves, and hetairai, at warfare with niggardly parents. Athens has ceased to be an empress. She has become a garrulous housewife. She contents herself with amusements,—still splendid with intelligence and dignified with wisdom, but not weighty with the consciousness of power, nor throbbing with the pulses of superabundant youthfulness and vigour.

In the Fine Arts this fourth period was still inventive. Under Alexander painting, which had received its Hellenic character from Polygnotus and Zeuxis, continued to flourish with Apelles. Indeed, it may be fairly said that while Art in the Heroic period was confined to the perfecting of the human body, in the second period it produced Architecture, in the third Sculpture, and in the fourth Painting—this being apparently the natural order of progression in the evolution of the fine arts. Lysippus, meanwhile, worthily represents the craft of the statuary in Alexander's age ; while the coins and gems of this time show that the glyptic and numismatic arts were at their zenith of technical perfection. Of Greek Music, in the absence of all sure information, it is difficult to speak. Yet it is probable that the age of Alexander witnessed a new and more complex development of orchestral music. We hear of vast symphonies performed at the Macedonian court.

Nor is this inconsistent with what we know about the history of Art : for music attains independence, ceases to be the handmaid of Poetry or Dancing, only in an age of intellectual reflectiveness. When nations have expressed themselves in the more obvious and external arts, they seek through harmonies and melodies to give form to their emotions.

The fifth, last, and longest period is one of Decline and Decay. But these words must be used with qualification when we speak of a people like the Greeks. What is meant is that the Greeks never recovered their national vigour or produced men so great as those whom we have hitherto been mentioning. The Macedonian empire prepared the way for the Roman : Hellenic civilization put on the garb of servitude to Rome and to Christianity. Henceforth we must not look to Greece proper for the more eminent achievements of the still surviving spirit of the Greeks. Greek culture in its decadence has become the heritage of the whole world. Syrians, Egyptians, Phrygians, Romans, carry on the tradition inherited from Athens. Hellas is less a nation now than an intellectual commonwealth, a society of culture holding various races in communion. The spiritual republic established thus by the Greek genius prepares the way for Christian brotherhood : the liberty of the children of the Muses leads onward to the freedom of the sons of God.

In this period, the chief centres are first Alexandria and Athens, then Rome and Byzantium. The real successors of Alexander were his generals. But the only dynasty founded by them which rises into eminence by its protection of the arts and literature was the Ptolemaic. At Alexandria, under the Ptolemies, libraries were formed and sciences were studied. Euclid the geometer, Aratus the astronomer, Ptolemy the cosmographer, add lustre to the golden age of Alexandrian culture. Callimachus at the same time leads a tribe of learned poets and erudite men of letters. Dramas meant to be read, like

Lycophron's *Cassandra* ; epics composed in the study, like the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, form the diversion of the educated world. Meanwhile the whole genus of parasitic *littérateurs* begin to flourish : grammarians, who settle and elucidate texts with infinite labour and some skill ; sophists and rhetoricians, whose purpose in life it is to adorn imaginary subjects and to defend problematical theses with conceits of the fancy and ingenious subtleties of reasoning. A young man writing to his mistress, a dinner-seeker who has failed to get an invitation, Themistocles at the Persian court, celebrated statues, philosophical puzzles—everything that can be wordily elaborated, is grist for their mill. The art of writing without having anything particular to say, the sister art of quarrying the thoughts of other people and setting them in elaborate prolixities of style, are brought to perfection. At the same time, side by side with these literary moths and woodlice, are the more industrious ants,—the collectors of anecdotes, compilers of biographies, recorders of quotations, composers of all sorts of commonplace books, students of the paste-brush and scissors sort, to whom we owe much for the preservation of scraps of otherwise lost treasures. Into such mechanical and frigid channels has the life of literature passed. Literature is no longer an integral part of the national existence, but a form of polite amusement. The genius of Hellas has nothing better to do than to potter about like a dilettante among her treasures.

The only true poets of this period are the Sicilian Idyllists. Over the waning day of Greek poetry Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus cast the sunset hues of their excessive beauty. Genuine and exquisite is their inspiration ; pure, sincere, and true is their execution. Yet we agree with Shelley, who compares their perfume to “the odour of the tuberose, which overcomes and sickens the spirit with excess of sweetness.” In the same way the erotic epigrammatists, though many

of them genuine poets, especially the exquisite Meleager of Gadara, in the very perfection of their peculiar quality of genius offer an unmistakable sign of decay. It is the fashion among a certain class of modern critics to rave about the art of Decadence, to praise the hectic hues of consumption and even the strange livors of corruption, more than the roses and the lilies of health. Let them peruse the epigrams of Meleager and of Straton. Of beauty in decay sufficient splendours may be found there.

While Alexandria was thus carrying the poetic tradition of Hellas to its extremity in the Idyll and the Epigram—carving cherrystones after the sculptor's mallet had been laid aside—and was continuing the criticism which had been set on foot by Aristotle, Athens persisted in her function of educating Europe. She remained a sort of university, in which the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle were adequately developed, though not in the most comprehensive spirit, by a crowd of Peripatetic and Academic sages, and where the founders of the Epicurean and Stoic schools gave a new direction to thought. It was during the first vigour of the Epicurean and Stoic teaching that the spirit of Hellas came into contact with the spirit of Rome. Hence Lucretius, Cicero, the Satirists—whatever, in fact, Rome may boast of philosophy, retains the tincture of the ethics of her schoolmasters. Rome, as Virgil proudly said, was called to govern—not to write poems or carve statues—but to quell the proud and spare the abject. Still she caught, to some extent, the æsthetic manners of her captive. Consequently, long after the complete political ascendancy of Rome was an established fact, and geographical Greece had become an insignificant province, the Hellenic spirit led the world. And some of its latest products are still dazzling in beauty, marvellous in ingenuity, Titanic in force. A few names selected from the list of Græco-Roman authors will be more impressive than

much description. Plutarch of Chæronea, in the first century, the author of the great biographies ; Lucian, the Syrian, in the second century, the master of irony and graceful dialogue and delicate description ; Epictetus, the Phrygian slave, in the second century, who taught the latest form of Stoicism to the Romans, and had for his successor Marcus Aurelius ; Philostratus of Lemnos, the rhetorician and author of the life of Apollonius ; Plotinus, Porphyrius, and Proclus, the revivers of Platonic philosophy under a new form of mysticism at Alexandria during the third and fourth centuries ; Longinus, the critic, who adorned Palmyra in the third century ; Heliodorus of Emesa, Achilles Tatius, Longus, Musæus, the erotic novelists and poets of the fourth and fifth centuries ; these, not to mention the Christian fathers, are a few of the great men whom Greece produced in this last period. But now notice how miscellaneous in nationality and in pursuit they are. One only is a Greek of the old stock—Plutarch, the Bœotian. One is a slave from Phrygia. Another is a Roman Emperor. A fourth is the native of the desert city of Tadmor. Two are Syrians. One is a Greek of the Ægean. Another is an Egyptian. From this we may see how the genius of the Greeks had been spread abroad to embrace all lands. No fact better illustrates the complete leavening of the world by their spirit.

But considering that this fifth period may be said to cover six centuries, from the death of Alexander to about 300 after Christ,—for why should we continue our computation into the dreary regions of Byzantine dulness?—it must be confessed that it is sterile in productiveness and inferior in the quality of its crop to any of the previous periods. Subtle and beautiful is the genius of Hellas still, because it *is* Greek ; strong and stern it is in part, because it has been grafted on the Roman character ; its fascinations and compulsions are powerful enough

to bend the metaphysics of the Christian faith. Yet, after all, it is but a shadow of its own self.

After the end of the fourth century the iconoclastic zeal and piety of the Christians put an end practically to Greek art and literature. Christianity was at that time the superior force in the world; and though Clement of Alexandria contended for an amicable treaty of peace between Greek culture and the new creed, though the two Gregories and Basil were, to use the words of Gibbon, "distinguished above all their contemporaries by the rare union of profane eloquence and orthodox piety," though the Bishops of the Church were selected from the ranks of scholars trained by Libanius and other Greek Sophists, yet the spirit of Christianity proved fatal to the spirit of Greek art. Early in the fifth century the Christian rabble at Alexandria, under the inspiration of their ferocious despot Cyril, tore in pieces Hypatia, the last incarnation of the dying beauty of the Greeks. She had turned her eye backwards to Homer and to Plato, dreaming that haply even yet the gods of Hellas might assert their power and resume the government of the world; and that the wisdom of Athens might supplant the folly of Jerusalem. But it was a vain and idle dream. The genius of Greece was effete. Christianity was pregnant with the mediæval and the modern world. In violence and bloodshed the Gospel triumphed. This rending in pieces of the past, this breaking down of temples and withering of illusions, was no doubt necessary. New wine cannot be poured into old bottles. No cycle succeeds another cycle in human affairs without convulsions and revolutions that rouse the passions of humanity. It is thus that

"God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

Yet even in this last dire struggle of the spirit of Pagan art with the spirit of Christian faith, when Beauty had become an

abomination in the eyes of the Holiest, on the ruins, as it were, of the desecrated fanes of Hellas, weeds lovely in their rankness flourished. While Cyril's mobs were dismembering Hypatia, the erotic novelists went on writing about Daphnis, and Musæus sang the lamentable death of Leander. Nonnus was perfecting a new and more polished form of the hexameter. These were the last, the very swan's notes, of Greek poetry. In these faint and too melodious strains the Muse took final farewell of her beloved Hellas. And when, after the lapse of 1000 years, the world awoke upon the ruins of the past, these were among the first melodies which caught its ear. One of the three first Greek books issued from the Aldine press about the year 1493, and called by Aldus the "precursors," was the poem of Hero and Leander. It was reprinted at Paris in 1507 by De Gourmont, at Alcala, in Spain, in 1514, and at Cologne in 1517 by Hirschhorn. Our Marlowe in the 16th century translated Musæus. The French Amyot translated Longus, and bequeathed to his nation a voluminous literature of pastorals founded upon the tale of Chloe. Tasso and Guarini, in Italy, caught the same strain; so that the accents of the modern Renaissance were an echo of the last utterances of dying Greece. The golden age of pastoral innocence, the *bell' età dell' oro*, of which the Alexandrians had been dreaming in the midst of their effete and decaying civilization, fascinated the imagination of our immediate ancestors, when, three centuries ago, they found the Sun of Art and Beauty shining in the heavens, new worlds to conquer, and indefinite expansions of the spirit to be realized.

CHAPTER II.

EMPEDOCLES.

The Grandeur of his Fame.—His Versatility of Genius.—His Self-exaltation.—His Mysticism.—His supposed Miracles.—Legends about his Death.—His Political Action.—His Poems.—Estimation in which the Ancients held them.—Their Prophetic Fervour.—Belief in Metempsychosis.—Purifying Rites.—Contempt for the Knowledge of the Senses.—Physical Theories.—The Poem on Nature—The Four Elements.—The Sphærus.—Love and Discord.—The Eclecticism of Empedocles.

THE figure of Empedocles of Agrigentum, when seen across the twenty-three centuries which separate us from him, presents perhaps a more romantic appearance than that of any other Greek philosopher. This is owing in a great measure to the fables which invest his life and death with mystery, to his reputation for magical power, and to the wild sublimity of some of his poetic utterances. Yet, even in his lifetime, and among contemporary Greeks, he swept the stage of life like a great tragic actor, and left to posterity the fame of genius as a poet, a physician, a patriot, and a philosopher. The well-known verses of Lucretius are enough to prove that the glory of Empedocles increased with age, and bore the test of time. Reading them, we cannot but regret that poems which so stirred the reverent enthusiasm of Rome's greatest singer have been scattered to the winds, and that what we now possess of their remains affords but a poor sample of their unimpaired magnificence.

Nothing is more remarkable about Empedocles than his

versatility and comprehensiveness. Other men of his age were as nobly born, as great in philosophic power, as distinguished for the part they bore in politics, as celebrated for poetic genius, as versed in mystic lore, in medicine, and in magic arts. But Parmenides, Pythagoras, Pausanias, and Epimenides could claim honour in but one, or two at most, of these departments. Empedocles united all, and that too, if we may judge by the temper of his genius and the few legends handed down to us about his life, in no ordinary degree. He seems to have possessed a warmth and richness of nature which inclined him to mysticism and poetry, and gave a tone of peculiar solemnity to everything he did, or thought, or said. At the same time, he was attracted by the acuteness of his intellect to the metaphysical inquiries which were agitating the western colonies of Greece, while his rare powers of observation enabled him to make discoveries in the then almost unexplored region of natural science. The age in which he lived had not yet thrown off the form of poetry in philosophical composition. Even Parmenides had committed his austere theories to hexameter verse.* Therefore, the sage of Agrigentum was easily led to concentrate his splendid powers on the production of one great work, and made himself a poet among philosophers, and a philosopher among poets, without thereby impairing his claims to rank highly both as a poet and also as a thinker among the most distinguished men of Greece. But Empedocles had not only deeply studied metaphysics, nature, and the arts of verse; whatever was mysterious in the world around him, in the guesses of past ages, and in the forebodings of his own heart, possessed a powerful attraction for the man who thought himself inspired of God. Having embraced the

* See the chapter on Parmenides in my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets* for a translation of the fragments of the Eleatic poems on Nature.

Pythagorean theories, he maintained the fallen state of men, and implored his fellow-creatures to purge away the guilt by which they had been disinherited and exiled from the joys of heaven. Thus he appeared before his countrymen not only as a poet and philosopher, but also as a priest and purifier. Born of a wealthy and illustrious house, he did not expend his substance merely on horse-racing and chariots, by which means of display his ancestors had gained a princely fame in Sicily; but, not less proud than they had been, he shod himself with golden sandals, set the laurel crown upon his head, and, trailing robes of Tyrian purple through the streets of Agrigentum, went attended by a crowd of serving-men and reverent admirers. He claimed to be a favourite of Phœbus, and rose at length to the pretension of divinity. His own words show this, gravely spoken, with no vain assumption, but with a certainty of honour well deserved :—

“Friends who dwell in the great city hard by the yellow stream of Acragas, who live on the Acropolis, intent on honourable cares, harbours revered of strangers, ignorant of what is vile ; welcome : but I appear before you an immortal god, having overpassed the limits of mortality, and walk with honour among all, as is my due, crowned with long fillets and luxuriant garlands. No sooner do I enter their proud prosperous cities than men and women pay me reverence, who follow me in thousands, asking the way to profit, some desiring oracles, and others racked by long and cruel torments, hanging on my lips to hear the spells that pacify disease of every kind.”

We can hardly wonder that some of the fellow-citizens of Empedocles were jealous of his pretensions, and regarded him with suspicious envy and dislike, when we read such lines of lofty self-exaltation. Indeed, it is difficult for men of the nineteenth century to understand how a great and wise philosopher could lay claim to divine honours in his own lifetime. This arrogance we have been accustomed to associate with the names of a Caligula and a Claudius. Yet when we consider the circumstances in which Empedocles was placed, and the nature

of his theories, our astonishment diminishes. The line of demarcation between this world and the supernatural was then but vague and undetermined. Popular theology abounded in legends of gods who had held familiar intercourse with men, and of men who had been raised by prowess or wisdom to divinity. The pedigrees of all distinguished families ended in a god at no great distance. Nor was it then a mere figure of speech when bards and priests claimed special revelations from Apollo, or physicians styled themselves the children of Asclepius. Heaven lay around the first Greeks in their infancy of art and science; it was long before the vision died away and faded into the sober daylight of Aristotelian philosophy. Thus when Empedocles proclaimed himself a god, he only stretched beyond the usual limit a most common pretension of all men learned in arts and sciences. His own speculations gave him further warrant for the assumption of the style of deity. For he held the belief that all living souls had once been demons or divine spirits, who had lost their heavenly birthright for some crime of impurity or violence, and yet were able to restore themselves to pristine splendour by the rigorous exercise of abstinence and expiatory rites. These rites he thought he had discovered: he had prayed and fasted; he had held communion with Phœbus the purifier, and received the special favour of that god, by being made a master in the arts of song, and magic, and healing, and priestcraft. Was he not therefore justified in saying that he had won again his rights divine, and transformed himself into a god on earth? His own words tell the history of his fall:—

“Woe to me that I did not fall a prey to death before I took the cursed food within my lips! . . . From what glory, from what immeasurable bliss, have I now sunk to roam with mortals on this earth?”

Again, he says—

“For I have been in bygone times a youth, a maiden, and a flowering shrub, a bird, yea, and a fish that swims in silence the deep sea.”

From this degraded state the spirit gradually emerges. Of the noblest souls he says:—

“ Among beasts they become lions dwelling in caverns of the earth upon the hills, and laurels among leafy trees, . . . and at last prophets, and bards, and physicians, and chiefs among the men of earth, from whence they rise to be gods supreme in honour, . . . sitting at banquets with immortal comrades, in their feasts unvisited by human cares, beyond the reach of fate and wearing age.”

Empedocles, by dint of pondering on nature, by long penance, by the illumination of his intellect and the coercion of his senses, had been raised before the natural term of life to that high honour, and been made the fellow of immortal gods. His language upon this topic is one of the points in which we can trace an indistinct resemblance between him and some of the Indian mystics. There is, however, no reason to suppose that Asiatic thought had any marked or direct influence on Greek philosophy. It is better to refer such similarities to the working of the same tendencies in the Greek and Hindu minds.

To those who disbelieved his words he showed the mighty works which he had wrought. Empedocles, during his lifetime, was known to have achieved marvels, such as only supernatural powers could compass. More than common sagacity and ingenuity in the treatment of natural diseases, or in the removal of obstacles to national prosperity, were easily regarded by the simple people of those times as the evidence of divine authority. Empedocles had devised means for protecting the citizens of Agrigentum from the fury of destructive winds. What these means were, we do not know ; but he received in consequence the title of *κωλυσανέμας*, or warder-off of winds. Again, he resuscitated, from the very jaws of death, a woman who lay senseless and unable to breathe, long after all physicians had despaired of curing her. This entitled him to be regarded as a master of the keys of life and death ; nor

did he fail to attribute his own power to the virtue of supernatural spells. But the greatest of his achievements was the deliverance which he wrought for the people of Selinus from a grievous pestilence. It seems that some exhalations from a marsh having caused this plague, Empedocles, at his own cost, cut a channel for two rivers through the fen, and purged away the fetid vapours. A short time after the cessation of the sickness, Empedocles, attired in tragic state, appeared before the Selinuntians at a banquet. His tall and stately figure wore the priestly robe; his brazen sandals rang upon the marble as he slowly moved with front benign and solemn eyes; beneath the sacrificial chaplet flowed his long Phœbean locks, and in his hand he bore a branch of bay. The nobles of Selinus rose; the banquet ceased; all did him reverence, and hailed him as a god, deliverer of their city, friend of Phœbus, intercëssor between angry Heaven and suffering men.

Closely connected with his claim to divinity was the position which Empedocles assumed as an enchanter. Gorgias, his pupil, asserts that he often saw him at the magic rites. Nor are we to suppose that this wizardry was a popular misinterpretation of his real power as a physician and philosopher. It is far more probable that Empedocles himself believed in the potency of incantations, and delighted in the ceremonies and mysterious songs by which the dead were recalled from Hades, and secrets of the other world wrung from unwilling fate. We can form to ourselves a picture of this stately and magnificent enchanter, convinced of his own supernatural ascendancy, and animated by the wild enthusiasm of his ardent nature, alone among the mountains of Girgenti, or by the sea-shore, invoking the elemental deities to aid his incantations, and ascribing the forebodings of his own poetic spirit to external inspiration or the voice of gods. In solitary meditations he had wrought out a theory of the world, and had conceived the notion of a

spiritual God, one and unseen, pure intellect, an everlasting omnipresent power, to whom might be referred those natural remedies that stopped the plague, or cured the sick, or found new channels for the streams. The early Greek philosophers were fond of attributing to some "common wisdom" of the world, some animating soul or universal intellect, the arts and intuitions to which they had themselves attained. Therefore, with this belief predominating in his mind, it is not strange that he should have trusted to the divine efficacy of his own spells, and have regarded the results of observation as a kind of supernatural wisdom. To his friend Pausanias the physician he makes these lofty promises, "Thou shalt learn every kind of medicines that avert diseases and the evils of old age. Thou too shalt curb the fury of untiring winds, and when it pleases thee thou shalt reverse thy charms and loose avenging storms. Thou shalt replace black rain-clouds with the timely drought that men desire, and when the summer's arid heat prevails, thou shalt refresh the trees with showers that rustle in the thirsty corn. And thou shalt bring again from Hades the life of a departed man." Like the Pythagoreans whom he followed, he seems to have employed the fascination of music in effecting cures: it is recorded of him that he once arrested the hand of a young man about to slay his father, by chanting to the lyre a solemn soul-subduing strain. The strong belief in himself which Empedocles possessed, inspired him with immense personal influence, so that his looks, and words, and tones, went farther than the force of other men. He compelled them to follow and confide in him, like Orpheus, or like those lofty natures which in every age have had the power of leading and controlling others by innate supremacy. That Empedocles tried to exhibit this superiority, and to heighten its effect by gorgeous raiment and profuse expenditure, by public ceremonies and mysterious modes of life, we need not doubt. There was much

of the spirit of Paracelsus in Empedocles, and vanity impaired the simple grandeur of his genius. In every age of the world's history there have been some such men—men in whom the highest intellectual gifts are blent with weakness inclining them to superstitious juggleries. Not content with their philosophical pretensions, or with poetical renown, they seek a more mysterious fame, and mix the pure gold of their reason with the dross of idle fancy. Their very weakness adds a glow of colour, which we miss in the whiter light of more purely scientific intellects. They are men in whom two natures cross—the poet and the philosopher, the mountebank and the seer, the divine and the fortune-teller, the rigorous analyst and the retailer of old wives' tales. But none have equalled Empedocles, in whose capacious idiosyncrasy the most opposite qualities found ample room for co-existence, who sincerely claimed the supernatural faculties which Paracelsus must have only half believed, and who lived at a time when poetry and fact were indistinguishably mingled, and when the world was still absorbed in dreams of a past golden age, and in rich foreshadowings of a boundless future.

We are not, therefore, surprised to read the fantastic legends which involve his death in a mystery. Whatever ground of fact they may possess, they are wholly consistent with the picture we have formed to ourselves of the philosopher, and prove at least the superstition which had gathered round his name. One of these legends has served all ages as a moral for the futility of human designs, and for the just reward of inordinate vanity. Every one who knows the name of Empedocles has heard that, having jumped into Etna in order to conceal the time and manner of his death, and thus to establish his divinity, fate frustrated his schemes by casting up his brazen slippers on the crater's edge. According to another legend, which resembles that of the death of Romulus, of Œdipus, and other divinized heroes, Empedocles is related to have formed

one of a party of eighty men who assembled to celebrate by sacrifice his restoration of the dying woman. After their banquet they retired to sleep. But Empedocles remained in his seat at table. When morning broke, Empedocles was nowhere to be found. In reply to the question of his friends, some one asserted that he had heard a loud voice calling on Empedocles at midnight, and that, starting up, he saw a light from heaven and burning torches. Pausanias, who was present at the sacrificial feast, sent far and wide to inquire for his friend, wishing to test the truth of this report. But piety restrained his search, and he was secretly informed by heavenly messengers that Empedocles had won what he had sought, and that divine honours should be paid to him. This story rests on the authority of Heraclides Ponticus, who professed to have obtained it from Pausanias. The one legend we may regard as the coinage of his foes, the other as a myth created by the superstitious admiration of his friends.

We have hitherto regarded Empedocles more in his private and priestly character than as a citizen. Yet it was not to be expected that a man so nobly born, and so remarkable for intellectual power, should play no public part in his native state. A Greek could hardly avoid meddling with politics, even if he wished to do so, and Empedocles was not one to hide his genius in the comparative obscurity of private life. While he was still a young man, Theron, the wise tyrant of Agrigentum, died, and a powerful aristocracy endeavoured to enslave the state. Empedocles manfully resisted them, supporting the liberal cause with vehemence, and winning so much popular applause that he is even reported to have received and refused the offer of the kingly power. By these means he made himself many foes among the nobility of Agrigentum; it is also probable that suspicion attached to him for trying to establish in his native city the Pythagorean commonwealth, which had been extirpated in South Italy. That he

loved spiritual dominion we have seen ; and this he might have hoped to acquire more easily by taking the intellectual lead among citizens of equal rights, than by throwing in his lot with the aristocratic party, or by exposing himself to the dangers and absorbing cares of a Greek tyrant. At any rate, it is recorded that he impeached and procured the execution of the leaders of the aristocracy ; thus rescuing the liberty of his nation at the expense of his own security. After a visit to Peloponnesus Empedocles returned to Agrigentum, but was soon obliged to quit his home again by the animosity of his political enemies. Where he spent the last years of his life, and died, remains uncertain.

It remains to estimate the poetical and philosophical renown of Empedocles. That his genius was highly valued among the ancients appears manifest from the panegyric of Lucretius. Nor did he fail to exhibit the versatility of his powers in every branch of poetical composition. Diogenes Laertius affirms that forty-three tragedies bearing his name were known to Hieronymus, from whom he drew materials for the life of Empedocles. Whether these tragedies were really written by the philosopher, or by another Sicilian of the same name, admits of doubt. But there is no reason why an author, possessed of such varied and distinguished talents as Empedocles, should not have tried this species of composition. Xenophanes is said to have composed tragedies ; and Plato's youthful efforts would, we fondly imagine, have afforded the world fresh proofs of his commanding genius, had they escaped the flames to which they were condemned by his maturer judgment. No fragments of the tragedies of Empedocles survive ; they probably belonged to the class of semi-dithyrambic compositions, which prevailed at Athens before the days of Æschylus, and which continued to be cultivated in Sicily. Some of the lyrical plays of the Italians—such, for instance, as the *Orfeo* of Poliziano—may enable us.

to form an idea of these simple dramas. After the tragedies, Diogenes makes mention of political poems. These may be referred to the period of the early manhood of Empedocles, when he was engaged in combat with the domineering aristocracy, and when he might have sought to spread his liberal principles through the medium of gnomic elegies, like those of Solon or Theognis. The fragments of the *καθαρμοί*, or poem on lustral rites, sufficiently display his style of earnest and imperious exhortation to make us believe that at a time of political contention he would not spare this powerful instrument of persuasion and attack. In the next place, we hear of an epic poem on the invasion of Greece by Xerxes, which Empedocles is said to have left unfinished, and which his sister or his daughter burned with other papers at his death. The great defeat of the Medes took place while Empedocles was still a youth. All Hellas had hung with breathless expectation on the event of Marathon and Salamis. The fall of Xerxes brought freedom and relief from terrible anxiety, not only to the towns of Attica and the Peloponnesus, but also to the shores of Sicily and Italy. It is not, therefore, unlikely that the triumph which excited Simonides and Æschylus to the production of masterpieces, may have stirred the spirit of the youthful patriot of Agrigentum. Another composition of Empedocles which perished under his sister's hands, was a Proemium to Apollo. The loss of this poem is deeply to be regretted. Empedocles regarded himself as specially protected by the god of song and medicine and prophetic insight. His genius would therefore naturally take its highest flight in singing praises to this mighty patron. The hymn to Zeus, which has been ascribed to Cleanthes, and some of the pseudo-Orphic declamations, may give us an idea of the gravity and enthusiasm which Empedocles would have displayed in treating so stirring a theme. Of his remaining works we possess fragments. The great poem on Nature, the Lustral Precepts, and the Dis-

course on Medicine, were all celebrated among the ancients. Fortunately, the inductions to the first and second of these have been preserved, and some lines addressed to Pausanias may be regarded as forming the commencement of the third. It is from these fragments, amounting in all to about 470 lines, that we must form our judgment of Empedocles, the poet and the sage.

That Empedocles was a poet of the didactic order is clear from the nature of his subjects. Even as early as the time of Aristotle, critics disputed as to whether poems written for the purpose of scientific instruction deserved the name of poetry. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle says,—οὐδὲν δὲ κοινόν ἐστιν Ὁμήρῳ καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον· διὸ τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν δίκαιον καλεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυσιόλογον μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητήν.* The title φυσιόλογος, or philosopher of nature, was of course generic, and might have been claimed by Heraclitus, on the strength of his prose writings, no less than by Empedocles. Lucretius, in the exordium to his poem, argues for the utility of disguising scientific precepts under the more attractive form of art; as we sweeten the lips of the vessel that contains bitter medicine, in order to induce the child to take it readily. And not only had Empedocles this reason in his favour for the use of verse, but also, at the age in which he lived, it was still a novelty to write prose at all; nor would it have been consistent with his theories of inspiration, and with the mysticism he professed, to abandon the poetic form of utterance. He therefore thought and wrote hexameters as naturally as the scientific men of the present day think and write their sentences and paragraphs, until the discourse is formed into a perfect whole. Allowing, then, for the subject of his poem, Empedocles was regarded by antiquity as first among the Greek didactic singers, though he com-

* Between Homer and Empedocles there is nothing in common except their metre: therefore it is right to call the former a poet, the latter a natural philosopher rather than a poet.

peted with Parmenides for this distinction, and was placed upon a level with Lucretius. Lactantius mentions them both together, in his definition of this kind of poetry. And Aristotle, in another treatise, now lost, but quoted by Diogenes, praises the artistic genius of the philosopher in these words: *Καὶ Ὀμηρικὸς ὁ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς καὶ δεινὸς περὶ τὴν φράσιν γέγονε μεταφορικὸς τε ὢν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις περὶ τὴν ποιητικὴν ἐπιτεύγμασι χρώμενος*.* The epithet *Ὀμηρικὸς* is very just; for not only is it clear that Empedocles had studied the poems of Homer with care, and had imbibed their phraseology, but he also possessed a genius akin to that of Homer in love of simplicity, in fidelity to nature, in unimpeded onward flow of energetic verse.

The simile of the girl playing with a water-clock, whereby Empedocles illustrates his theory of respiration, and that of the lantern, which serves to explain his notion of the structure of the eye, are both of them Homeric in their unadorned simplicity and vigour. Again, such epithets as these, *πολυαίματον* (full-blooded) for the liver, *ιλάειρα* (gentle) for the moon, *ὄξυβελῆς* (quick-darting) for the sun, *πολυστέφανος* (crowned) for majesty, *θεμερῶπις* (grave-visaged) for harmony, and the constant repetition of *θεοὶ δολιχαίωνες τιμῇσι φέριστοι* (the long-aged gods in honour foremost), have the true Homeric ring. Like Homer, he often chooses an epithet specific of the object which he wishes to describe, but not especially suited to the matter of his argument. Thus *πολυκλαύτων γυναικῶν* (women given to tears) occurs when there is no particular reason to fix the mind upon the tearfulness of women. But the poetic value of the passage is increased by the mind being thus carried away from the logical order of ideas to a generality on which it can repose. At other times, when this is necessary,

* Empedocles again was Homeric in style, and clever in his use of phrase, for he inclined to metaphor, and employed the other admirable instruments of the poetic art.

the epithets are as accurately descriptive as those of a botanist or zoologist : ἐν κόγχαισι θαλασπονόμοις βαρυνώτοις (in whelks that inhabit the sea with heavy backs) . . . λιθορρόινων τε χελωνῶν (stony-coated tortoises), for example. Again, Empedocles gives rein to his imagination by creating bold metaphors ; he calls the flesh σαρκῶν χιτῶν (a robe of flesh), and birds πτεροβάμονας κύμβας (boats that move with wings). Referring to his four elements, he thus personifies their attributes : “ Fiery Zeus, and Herè, source of vital breath, and Aidoneus, and Nestis, with her tears.” At another time he speaks of “ earth, and ocean with his countless waves, and liquid air, the sun-god and ether girdling round the universe in its embrace.”

The passage, too, in which he describes the misery of earth rises to a sublime height. It may well have served as the original of Virgil's celebrated lines in the sixth *Æneid* :—

“ I lifted up my voice, I wept and wailed, when I beheld the unfamiliar shore. A hideous shore, on which dwell murder, envy, and the troop of baleful destinies, wasting corruption, and disease. Through Atë's meadow they go wandering up and down in gloom. There was the queen of darkness, and Heliope with her far-searching eyes, and bloody strife, and mild-eyed peace, beauty and ugliness, swiftness and sloth, and lovely truth, and insincerity with darkling brows. Birth too and death, slumber and wakefulness, motion and immobility, crowned majesty and squalid filth, discordant clamour and the voice of gods.”

We can understand by these passages how Empedocles not only was compared with Homer by Aristotle, but also with Thucydides and Æschylus by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who speaks of his “ austere harmony ” (αὐστηρὰν ἁρμονίαν). The conciseness of his argumentative passages, the breadth of his treatment, and the dryness of his colouring, to quote the terms of painting, resemble the style of Thucydides, while his bold figures and gloomy grandeur are like those of Æschylus. Plutarch, in the treatise on the genius of Socrates, speaks of the style of Empedocles at large, both as regards his poems and

his theories, as "inspired with dithyrambic ecstasy" (*μάλα βεβακχευμένη*). This seems a contradiction to the "austere harmony" of Dionysius. But there are passages which justify the title. This exordium, for instance, savours of prophetic fury :—

"It stands decreed by fate, an ancient ordinance of the immortal gods, established from everlasting, ratified by ample oaths, that, when a spirit of that race, which has inherited the length of years divine, sinfully stains his limbs with blood, he must go forth to wander thrice ten thousand years from heaven, passing from birth to birth through every form of mortal mutability, changing the toilsome paths of life without repose, even as I now roam, exiled from God, an outcast on this world, the bondman of insensate strife.

"Alas, ill-fated race of mortals, thrice accursed ! from what dire struggles and what groans have ye been born ! The air in its anger drives them to the sea, and ocean spues them forth upon the solid land, earth tosses them into the flames of the untiring sun, he flings them back again into the whirlwinds of the air ; from one to the other are they cast, and all abhor them."

And the following adjuration has a frantic energy, to modern readers almost laughable but for its indubitable gravity,—

"Wretches, thrice wretches, keep your hands from beans !"

or, again, with reference to the abomination of animal food :—

"The father drags along his dear son changed in form, and slays him, pouring prayers upon his head. But the son goes begging mercy from his maniac sire. The father heeds him not, but goads him on, and, having slaughtered him, prepares a cursed meal. In like manner sons take their fathers, and children their mothers, and tearing out the life devour the kindred flesh. Will ye not put an end to this accursed slaughter ? Will ye not see that ye consume each other in blind ignorance of soul ?"

It is not strange that the poems of Empedocles were pilfered by oracle-mongers in after-ages.

Besides these passages, there are some of a milder beauty which deserve high praise for their admirable power of suggesting the picture that the poet wishes to convey. The following lines describe the golden age of old,—to which Empedocles looked back with melancholy longing :—

“There every animal was tame and familiar with men, both beasts and birds, and mutual love prevailed. Trees flourished with perpetual leaves and fruits, and ample crops adorned their boughs through all the year. Nor had these happy people any Ares or mad Uproar for their god ; nor was their monarch Zeus, or Cronos, or Poseidon, but Queen Cypris. Her favour they besought with pious symbols and with images, and fragrant essences, and censers of pure myrrh, and frankincense, and with brown honey poured upon the ground. The altars did not reek with bullocks’ gore.”

It may sound ridiculous to say so, yet Empedocles resembles Shelley in the quality of his imagination and in many of his utterances. The lines just quoted, the belief in a beneficent universal soul of nature, the hatred of animal food, the love of all things moving or growing on the face of earth, the sense of ancient misery and present evil, are all, allowing for the difference of centuries, and race, and education, points by which the Greek and the English poets meet in a community of nature. Two more passages illustrative of the poetical genius of Empedocles may be quoted. In the first he describes the nature of God, invisible and omnipresent. In the second he asserts the existence of an universal law. They both are remarkable for simplicity and force, and elevation of style :—

“Blessed is the man who hath obtained the riches of the wisdom of God ; wretched is he who hath a false opinion about things divine.

“He (God) may not be approached, nor can we reach him with our eyes or touch him with our hands. No human head is placed upon his limbs, nor branching arms ; he has no feet to carry him apace, nor other parts of man : but he is all pure mind, holy, and infinite, darting with swift thought through the universe from end to end.”

“This law binds all alike, and none are free from it : the common ordinance which all obey prevails through the vast spaces of wide-ruling air and the illimitable fields of light in endless continuity.”

The quotations which have served to illustrate the poetical genius of Empedocles have also exhibited one aspect of his philosophy—that wherein he was connected with the Pythagoreans. It is quite consistent with the whole temper of his intellect that he should have been attracted to the semi-Oriental

mysticism which then was widely spread through Grecian Italy and Sicily. After the dissolution of the monastic commonwealth founded by Pythagoras, it is probable that refugees imbued with his social and political theories scattered themselves over the adjacent cities, and from some of these men Empedocles may have imbibed in early youth the dream-like doctrines of an antenatal life, of future immortality, of past transgression and the need of expiation, of abstinence, and of the bond of fellowship which bound man to his kindred sufferers upon the earth. It is even asserted in one legend that the philosopher of Agrigentum belonged to the Pythagorean Society, and was expelled from it for having been the first to divulge its secrets. In later life these theories were developed by Empedocles after his own fashion, and received a peculiar glow of poetic colouring from his genius. There is no need to suppose that he visited the East and learned the secrets of Gymnosophists. A few Pythagorean seeds sown in his fruitful soil sprang up and bore a hundred-fold. Referring to the exordium of his poem on Nature, and to the lines in which he describes the unapproachable Deity, we find that Empedocles believed in a pristine state of happiness, when the "Dæmons," or "gods, long of life, supreme in honour," dwelt together, enjoying a society of bliss. Yet this state was not perfect, for some of these immortals stained their hands with blood, and some spoke perjury, and so sin entered in and tainted heaven. After such offence the erring spirit, by the fateful, irrevocable, and perennial law of the divine commonwealth, had to relinquish his heavenly throne and wander "thirty thousand seasons" apart from his comrades. In this period of exile he passed through all the changes of metempsychosis. According to the rigorous and gloomy conception of Empedocles, this change was caused by the hatred of the elements; earth, air, fire, and water refusing to retain the criminal, and tossing him about from one to the other

without intermission. Thus, he might be a plant, a bird, a fish, a beast, or a human being in succession. But the transmigration did not depend upon mere chance. If the tortured spirit, environed, as he was, by the conflicting shapes and contradictory principles and baleful destinies which crowded earth—"the over-vaulted cave," the "gloomy meadow of discord," as Empedocles in his despair described our globe—could yet discover some faint glimmering of the truth, seize and hold fast some portion of the heavenly clue, then he might hope to reascend to bliss. Instead of abiding among birds, and unclean beasts, and common plants, his soul passed into the bodies of noble lions, and mystic bay-trees, or became a bard, a prophet, a ruler among men, and lastly rose again to the enjoyment of undying bliss. Throughout these wanderings death was impossible. Empedocles laughed at the notion of birth and death; he seems to have believed in a fixed number of immortal souls, capable of any transformation, but incapable of perishing. Therefore, when his spirits, falling earthward, howled at the doleful aspect of the hideous land, the very poignancy of their grief consisted in that bitter thought of Dante's, "*questi non hanno speranza di morte*"—in that thought which makes the Buddhist welcome annihilation. It has been already hinted, that although the soul by its forced exile lost not only happiness but also knowledge, yet the one might be in part retrieved, and the other toilsomely built up again in some degree by patient observation, prayer, and magic rites. On this point hinges the philosophy of Empedocles. It is here that his mysticism and his science are united into one system. In like manner, Plato's philosophy rests upon the doctrine of Anamnesis, and is connected with the vision of a past beatitude, the tradition of a miserable fall, and the prospect of a possible restoration. Empedocles, like Parmenides and Xenophanes in their disquisitions on the eternal Being, like Plato in his references to the Supreme Idea, seems to have

imagined that the final Essence of the universe was unapproachable, and to have drawn a broad distinction between the rational and sensual orders, between the world as cognizable by pure intellect, and the world as known through the medium of human sense. The lines of Empedocles upon God, which have been already quoted, are similar to those of Xenophanes : both philosophers assert the existence of an unknown Deity pavilioned in dense inscrutability, yet not the less to be regarded as supreme and omnipresent and omnipotent—as God of gods, as life of life. How to connect this intuition with the physical speculations of Empedocles is difficult. The best way seems to be to refrain from identifying his eloquent description of the unknown God with the Sphærus of his scientific theories, and to believe that he regarded the same universe from different points of view at different times, as if in moments of high exaltation he obtained a glimpse of the illimitable Being by a process of ecstatic illumination, while in more ordinary hours of meditation his understanding and his senses helped him to obtain a knowledge of the actual phenomena of this terrestrial globe. His own language confirms this view of the case:—

“Weak and narrow,” he says, “are the powers implanted in the limbs of men ; many the woes that fall on them and blunt the edge of thought ; short is the measure of the life in death through which they toil ; then are they borne away, like smoke they vanish into air, and what they dream they know is but the little each hath stumbled on in wandering about the world ; yet boast they all that they have learned the whole—vain fools ! for what *that* is, no eye hath seen, no ear hath heard, nor can it be conceived by mind of man. Thou, then, since thou hast fallen to this place, shalt know no more than human wisdom may attain.

“But, O ye gods, avert the madness of those babblers from my tongue, and cause the stream of holy words to issue from my hallowed lips. And thou, great Muse of Memory, maiden with the milk-white arms, I pray to thee to teach me things that creatures of a day may hear. Come from the House of Holiness, and bring to me her harnessed car.”

Here we see plainly set forth the impossibility of mortal, fallen intellects attaining to a perfect knowledge of the Uni-

verse, the impiety of seeking such knowledge, or pretending to have found it ; and, at the same time, the limitations under which true science remains within the reach of human beings. How this science may be reached, he tells us in some memorable lines, probably supposed to issue from the lips of the Muse whom he invokes :—"But come, search diligently, and discover what is clear in every realm of sense, . . . check the conviction of thy senses, and judge by reason what is evident in every case."

Thus the senses, although feeble and erring guides, are, after all, the gates to knowledge ; and their reports, when tested by the light of reason, form the data for human speculation. The senses, resident in the limbs, are composed in certain proportions of the four elements, which also constitute the earth. Therefore, between the frame of man and the world outside him, there is a community of substance, whereby he is enabled to know. *"Ὅμοια ὁμοίοις γινώσκειται"* (likes are known by likes) is the foundation of our philosopher's theory of knowledge. The rational soul, being that immortal part of man whereon depends his personal identity, whether he take the shape of plant or animal, receives and judges the results of sensation. This theory, it will be observed, has a kind of general similarity to that of Parmenides. Empedocles draws a marked difference between the province of the senses and of the reason, and inveighs against the impotence of the former. Again, he speaks of the real being of the world as pure and perfect intellect ; and at the same time elaborately describes the universe as it appears to human sense and understanding. But here the likeness ends. Parmenides has no mysticism, and indulges in no theology. He believes in the actual truth of his rational ontology, and sneers at the senses. "Thy fate it is," he says, "all mysteries to learn, both the unswerving mind of truth that wins a sure assent, and the vain thoughts of men, in which no certainty abides. But, baseless as they are, these also shalt

thou learn ; since thou must traverse every field of knowledge, and discern the fabric of the dreams of men." His ontology is just as elaborate as his physics, and he evidently considers its barren propositions of more value than any observations on astronomy or physiology. Empedocles, on the other hand, despaired of ontology, and gave all his mind to explanations of the physical universe—how it came to be, and what laws governed its alternations,—believing all along that there was a higher region of pure intellect beyond the reach of his degraded soul. "Here we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face." In this respect he resembled Xenophanes more than Parmenides. Xenophanes had said, "No man hath been, nor will ever be, who knows for certain all about the gods, and everything of which I speak ; for should one publish the most sure and settled truth, yet even he cannot be said to *know* ; opinion is supreme in all things." Empedocles belonged more to the age behind him than to that which followed ; and his extensive knowledge of nature was a part of his artistic rather than his scientific temperament.

Yet, allowing for the march of human progress during twenty-three centuries, we are bound to hold much the same language as Empedocles regarding the limitations of knowledge. We have, indeed, infinitely extended our observation of phenomena ; we have gained fuller conceptions of the Deity and of the destinies of man. But the plummet which he threw into the bottomless abyss of science has as yet found no bottom, and the circle which it made by striking on the surface of the illimitable ocean has grown and grown, but yet has touched no shore on any side. Like him, we still speak of an unapproachable God, utterly beyond the reach of human sense and intellect ; like him, we still content ourselves with receiving the reports of our senses, comparing and combining them by means of our understanding, and thus obtaining some conception of the universe in which we live.

If we reject the light of Christianity, the guesses which we form about a future world are less vague than those of Empedocles, but founded on no surer scientific basis ; the God we worship still remains enveloped in symbols ; we still ascribe to him, if not a human form, at least the reason, partialities, and passions of mankind. Indeed, in this respect, the sage of Agrigentum stood unconsciously upon the platform which only our profoundest thinkers have attained. He felt the awe of the Unseen—he believed in the infinite Being,—but he refused to dogmatize about His attributes, confining his own reason to the phenomenal universe which he strove in every way to understand, and to employ for the good of his race. Empedocles was greater than most of his contemporaries, for he neither believed it possible to explain the whole mystery of the world, nor did he yet reject the notion of there being a profound mystery. He steered clear between the Parmenides and Democritus of his own day—between the Spinoza and the materialist of modern speculation. Herein the union of philosophy and poetry, of thought and feeling, in his nature, gave the tone to all his theories. We must not, however, in our praise forget that all these problems appeared in a far more simple form to the Greeks of that age than to ourselves, and were therefore more hastily and lightly answered. Between the ontology of Parmenides and that of Hegel what a step there is ! What meagre associations gather round the one ; what many-sided knowledge gives substance to the other !

Remembering, therefore, in what light Empedocles regarded his own physical speculations, we may proceed to discuss them more in detail. We shall find that he deserved a large portion of that praise which Bacon rather whimsically lavished on the pre-Socratic philosophers, to the disadvantage of the mightier names of Plato and Aristotle.

The poem on Nature is addressed to Pausanias the physician, who was a son of Anchitus of Agrigentum, and a special friend

of Empedocles. To Pausanias, the philosopher begins his instruction with these words :—"First learn what are the four chief roots of everything that is : fiery Zeus, and Herè, source of vital breath, and Aidoneus, and Nestis with her tears, who is the fount of moisture in the world." Thus Empedocles, after the fashion of the Pythagoreans, allegorized his four elements. In other passages he calls them "fire, water, earth, and air's immeasurable height ;" or "earth, and ocean with his countless waves, and liquid air, the sun-god, and ether girdling the universe in its embrace ;" or again, "Hephæstus, rain, and radiant ether ;" or lastly, "light, earth, heaven, and ocean." It will be seen that he designated his elements sometimes by mythological titles, sometimes by abstract terms, and sometimes by selecting one or other natural object—such as the sun, the air, the ocean—in which they were most manifest. It is well known that Empedocles was the first philosopher to adopt the four elements, which, since his day, continued to rule supreme over natural science, until modern analysis revealed far simpler and broader bases. Other speculators of the Ionian sect had maintained each of these four elements,—Thales the water, Anaximenes the air, Heraclitus the fire, and perhaps (but this rests on no sure evidence), Pherecydes the earth. Xenophanes had said, "Of earth and water are all things that come into existence." Parmenides had spoken of dark and light, thick and subtle, substances. Each of these fundamental principles is probably to be regarded not as pure fire, or pure water, or pure air, but as an universal element differing in rarity, and typified according to the analogical necessities of language, by means of some familiar object. The four elements of Empedocles appear to have been suggested to him, partly by his familiarity with contemporary speculation, and partly by his observation of Nature. They held their ground so long in scientific theory, because they answered so exactly to a superficial view of the

world. Earth with everything of a solid quality, water including every kind of fluid, fire that burns or emits light, air that can be breathed, appear to constitute an exhaustive division of the universe. Of the eternity of these four primal substances, according to the Empedoclean theory, there is no doubt. The philosopher frequently reiterates his belief in the impossibility of an absolute beginning or ending, though he acquiesces in the popular use of these terms to express the scientific conceptions of dissolution and recombination.

These elements, then, were the material part of the world according to Empedocles. But inherent in them, as a tendency is inherent in an organism, and yet separable in thought from them as the soul is separable from the body, were two conflicting principles of equal power, love and discord. Love and discord by their operation wrought infinite changes in the universe: for it was the purpose of love to bind the elements together into a compact, smooth, motionless globe; and of discord to separate them one from another, and to keep them distinct in a state of mutual hostility. When, therefore, either love or discord got the upper hand, the phenomenal universe could not be said to exist, but in the intermediate state was a perpetual order of growth and decay, composition and dissolution, whereby the world, as we behold it, came into existence. This intermediate state, *das Werdende*, τὸ γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον (the Becoming, that which comes into existence and passes out of it again by dissolution), was φύσις, or Nature. The conflicting energies of love and discord formed the pulses of its mighty heart, the systole and diastole of its being, the one power tending to life, the other power to death, the one pushing all the elements forward to a perfect unity of composition, the other rending them apart. To the universe when governed by love in supremacy Empedocles gave the name of σφαῖρος (perfect globe), which he also called a god. This σφαῖρος answered to the Eleatic εἶν, while the disjointed elements

subservient to the force of strife corresponded to the Eleatic *πόλλα*.* Thus the old Greek antagonism of Good and Evil, One and Many, Love and Hatred, Being and Not-being, were interpreted by Empedocles. He looked on all that is, *das Werdende*, as transitory between two opposite and contradictory existences.

Again, according to his system, the alternate reigns of love and discord succeeded one another at fixed intervals of time ; so that, from one point of view, the world was ceaselessly shifting, and from another point of view, was governed by eternal and unalterable Law. Thus he reconciled the Heraclitean flux and the Parmenidean immobility by a middle term. Each of the elements possessed a separate province, had separate functions, and was capable of standing by itself. To fire it would seem that the philosopher assigned a more active influence than to any of the other elements ; therefore a kind of dualism may be recognized in his Universe between this ruling principle and the more passive ingredients of air, earth, and water. The influence of love and harmony kept them joined and interpenetrated, and so mingled as to bring the different objects which we see around us into being. Empedocles professed to understand the proportions of these mixtures, and measured them by Pythagorean rules of arithmetic. Thus everything subsists by means of transformation and mixture ; absolute beginning and ending are impossible.

Such, briefly stated, is the theory of Empedocles. The following passage may be quoted to show how the phenomenal Universe comes into being under the influence of love :—

“ When strife has reached the very bottom of the seething mass, and love assumes her station in the centre of the ball, then everything begins to come together, and to form one whole—not instantaneously, but different substances come forth, according to a steady process of development.

* For the Parmenidean hypothesis of a fixed and finite sphere of Being, see my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets*, chap. v. p. 142.

Now, when these elements are mingling, countless kinds of things issue from their union. Much, however, remains unmixed, in opposition to the mingling elements, and these malignant strife still holds within his grasp. For he has not yet withdrawn himself altogether to the extremities of the globe ; but part of his limbs still remain within its bounds, and part have passed beyond. As strife, however, step by step, retreats, mild and innocent love pursues him with her force divine ; things which had been immortal instantly assume mortality ; the simple elements become confused by interchange of influence. When these are mingled, then the countless kinds of mortal beings issue forth, furnished with every sort of form—a sight of wonder.”

In another passage this development is compared to the operation of a painter mixing his colours, and forming with them a picture of various objects. Discord is said to have made the elements immortal, because he kept them apart, and would willingly have preserved their separate qualities ; whereas love mixes them together, breaks up their continuity, and confuses their kinds. What Empedocles exactly meant by *Sphærus* is hard to understand ; nor do we know how far he intended Chance to operate in the formation of the Universe. He often uses such expressions as these, “So they chanced to come together,” and describes the amorphous condition of the first organisms in a way that makes one think he fancied a perfectly chaotic origin. Yet “the art of Aphrodite,” “so Cypris ordained their form,” are assertions of designing intelligence. In fact, we may well believe that Empedocles, in the infancy of speculation, was led astray by his double nomenclature. When talking of Aphrodite, he naturally thought of a person ruling creation ; when using the term “Love,” he naturally conceived an innate tendency, which might have been the sport of chance in a great measure. It also appears probable that, when Empedocles spoke of “Chance” and “Necessity,” he referred to some inherent quality in the elements themselves, whereby they grew together under certain laws, and that the harmony and discord which ruled them in turn, were regarded by him as forces aiding and preventing their union.

To understand the order of creation, we may begin by imagining the sphere, which, in the words of Empedocles, "by the hidden bond of harmony is stablished, and rejoices in unbroken rest . . . in perfect equipoise, of infinite extent, it stays a full-orbed sphere rejoicing in unbroken rest." Love now is omnipotent ; she has knit all the elements into one whole ; Discord has retreated, and abides beyond the globe. But soon his turn begins : he enters the sphere, and "all the limbs of the god begin to tremble." Now the elements are divided one from the other—ether first, then fire, then earth, then water from the earth. Still the elements are chaotic ; but wandering about the spaces of the world, and "permeating each the other's realm," they form alliances and tend to union. Love is busy no less than Discord. The various tribes of plants and animals appear at first in a rudimentary and monstrous condition : "many heads sprouted up without necks, and naked arms went wandering forlorn of shoulders, and solitary eyes were straying destitute of foreheads." Still the process of seething and intermingling continued ; "when element with element more fully mixed, these members fell together by haphazard . . . many came forth with double faces and two breasts, some shaped like oxen with a human front, others, again, of human race with a bull's head ; and some were mixed of male and female parts." Unfortunately, the lines in which he describes the further progress of development have been lost, and we do not know how the interval between chaos and order was bridged over in his system. Only with reference to human beings he asserts that in the earliest stage they were produced in amorphous masses, containing the essence, as it were, of both male and female ; and that after the separation of these masses into two parts, each part yearned to join its tally. And therefrom sprang the passion of desire in human hearts. This theory has been worked out by Plato artistically in the *Symposium*. Also with reference to the accretion of the

phenomenal universe, he says that earth formed the basis of all hard and solid substances, preponderating in the shells of fish, and so on. Bones were wrought of earth, and fire, and water, "marvellously jointed by the bonds of Harmony." It is needless to follow Empedocles through all his scattered fancies, to show that he knew that the night was caused by the earth intercepting the sun's rays, or that he thought the sun reflected heaven's fire like a mirror, or that he placed the intellect in the blood, and explained respiration by a theory of pores, and the eyesight by imagining a fire shut up within the pupil. The fragments we possess are too scanty to allow of our obtaining a perfect view of his physical theory; all we gather from them is that Empedocles possessed more acquired and original knowledge than any of his contemporaries.

It may appear from what has been said about his system that Empedocles was at best a great Eclectic. But this is not entirely the case. If he deserves the name of Eclectic, he deserves it in the same sense as Plato, though it need not be said how infinitely inferior, as an original thinker, he is to Plato. Empedocles was deeply versed in all the theories, metaphysical, cosmogonical, mystical, and physiological, of his age. He viewed from a high station all the problems, intellectual, social, and moral, which then vexed Greece. But he did not pass his days in a study or a lecture-room, nor did he content himself with expounding or developing the theories of any one master. He went abroad, examined nature for himself, cured the sick, thought his own thoughts, and left an impress on the constitution of his native state. In his comprehensive mind all the learning he had acquired from men, from books, from the world, and from reflection, was consolidated into one system, to which his double interest for mysticism and physics gave a double aspect. He was the first in Greece to reconcile Eleatic and Heraclitean speculations, the puzzle of plurality and unity, the antagonism of good and evil, in one theory, and

to connect it with another which revealed a solemn view of human obligations and destinies, and required a life of social purity and self-restraint. The misfortune of Empedocles as a philosopher consisted in this—that he succeeded only in resuming the results of contemporary speculation, and of individual research, in a philosophy of indisputable originality, without anticipating the new direction which was about to be given to human thought by Socrates and Plato. He closed one period,—the period of poetry and physical theories and mysticism. The period of prose, of logic, and of ethics, was about to begin. He was the last of the great colonial sages of Greece. The Hellenic intellect was destined henceforth to centre itself at Athens.

CHAPTER III.

THE GNOMIC POETS.

Definition of the term Gnostic.—The Elegiac Metre.—The Age of the Despots in Greece.—Three Periods in Elegiac Poetry : the Martial, the Erotic, the Gnostic.—Callinus.—Tyrtaeus.—Mimnermus.—His Epicurean Philosophy of Life.—Solon.—The Salaminian Verses.—Doctrine of Hereditary Guilt.—Greek Melancholy.—Phocylides.—His Bourgeois Intellect.—Xenophanes.—Theognis.—The Politics of Mégara.—Cyrnus.—Precepts upon Education and Conduct in Public and Private Life.—The Biography of Theognis.—Dorian Clubs.—Lamentations over the Decay of Youth and Beauty.

THE term Gnostic, when applied to a certain number of Greek poets, is arbitrary. There is no definite principle for rejecting some and including others in the class. It has, however, been usual to apply this name to Solon, Phocylides, Theognis, and Simonides of Ceos. Yet there seems no reason to exclude some portions of Callinus, Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus, and Xenophanes. These poets, it will be observed, are all writers of the elegy. Some of the lyric poets, however, and iambographers, such as Simonides of Amorgos and Archilochus, have strong claims for admission into the list. For, as the derivation of the name implies, gnostic poets are simply those who embody *γνώμαι*, or sententious maxims on life and morals, in their verse ; and though we find that the most celebrated masters of this style composed elegies, we yet may trace the thread of gnostic thought in almost all the writers of their time. Conversely, the most genuine authors of elegiac gnomes trespassed upon the domain of lyric poetry, and sang of love and wine and personal experience no less than of morality. In fact, the gnostic

poets represent a period of Greek literature during which the old and simple forms of narrative poetry were giving way to lyrical composition on the one hand, and to meditative writing on the other ; when the epical impulse had become extinct, and when the Greeks were beginning to think definitely. The elegy, which seems to have originated in Asia Minor, and to have been used almost exclusively by poets of the Ionian race for the expression of emotional and reflective sentiments, lent itself to this movement in the development of the Greek genius, and formed a sort of midway stage between the impassioned epic of the Homeric age and the no less impassioned poetry and prose of the Athenian age of gold.

Viewed in this light, the gnomic poets mark a transition from Homer and Hesiod to the dramatists and moralists of Attica. The ethical precepts inherent in the epos received from them a more direct and proverbial treatment ; while they in turn prepared for the sophists, the orators, and Socrates.

This transitional period in the history of Greek literature, corresponding, as it does, to similar transitions in politics, religion, and morality, offers many points of interest. Before Homer, poetry had no historical past, but after the age of the Epic a long time elapsed before the vehicle of verse was exchanged for that of prose. Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles wrote poems upon nature in hexameters. Solon and Theognis committed their state-craft and ethics to elegiac couplets. Yet at the same time Heraclitus and the seven sages were developing the germs of prose, and preparing the way for Attic historians and philosophers.

Again, whereas Homer introduces us to a Hellas small in its extent, and scarcely separated from surrounding tribes, we find in the transitional period that the strength and splendour of the Greek race are dissipated over distant colonies, Hellenic civilization standing out in definite relief against adjacent barbarism. The first lyrical and elegiac poets come from the

islands of the Archipelago, or from the shores of Asia Minor. The first dramatists of note are Sicilian. Italy and Sicily afford a home to the metaphysical poets, while the philosophers of the Ionian sect flourish at Ephesus and Miletus.

Corresponding to this change in the distribution of the race, a change was taking place in the governments of the States. The hereditary monarchies of Homer's age have disappeared, and, after passing through a period of oligarchical supremacy, have given place to tyrannies. The tyrants of Miletus and of Agrigentum, rising from the aristocracy itself; those of Corinth, Athens, and Megara, owing their power to popular favour; others, like Cylon, flourishing a while by force of mere audacity and skill; others, again, like Pittacus of Mitylene, using the rights of their dictatorship for the public benefit,—had this one point in common: it was the interest of all of them to destroy the traditional prejudices of the race, to gather a powerful and splendid court around them, to patronise art, to cultivate diplomacy, and to attach men of ability to their persons. As the barons of feudalism encouraged the romances of the Niebelungen, Carlovingian, and Arthurian cycles, so the hereditary monarchies had caused the cyclical epos to flourish. It was not for the interest of the tyrants to revive Homeric legends, but rather to banish from the State all traces of the chivalrous past. With this view Cleisthenes of Sicyon put down the worship of Adrastus, and parodied the heroic names of the three tribes. Poetry, thus separated from the fabulous past, sought its subjects in the present,—in personal experience, in pleasure, in politics, in questions of diplomacy, in epigrammatic morality.

Such, then, was the period during which the gnostic poets flourished,—a period of courts and tyrannies, of colonial prosperity, of political animation, of social intrigue, of intellectual development, of religious transformation, of change and uncertainty in every department. Behind them lay primitive

Homeric Hellas ; before them, at no great distance, was the time when the Greek genius would find its home in Athens. Poetry and Science were then to be distinguished ; the philosophers, historians, and orators were to make a subtle and splendid instrument of Greek prose ; the dramatists were to develop the choric and dialectic beauty of the Greek language to its highest possible perfection ; tyrannies were to be abolished, and the political energies of Hellas to be absorbed in the one great struggle between the Dorian and Ionian families. But in the age of gnómic poetry these changes were still future ; and though the mutations of Greek history were accomplished with unparalleled rapidity, we yet may draw certain lines, and say—Here was a breathing-time of indecision and suspense ; this period was the eve before a mighty revolution. I propose, therefore, to consider the gnomic poets as the representatives to some extent of such an age, and as exponents of the rudimentary, social, and political philosophy of Greece before Socrates.

Three periods may be marked in the development of the early Greek elegiac poetry—the Martial, the Erotic, and the Gnostic. Callinus and Tyrtæus are the two great names by which the first is distinguished. Mimnermus gave a new direction to this style of composition, fitting the couplet, which had formerly been used for military and patriotic purposes, to amatory and convivial strains.* In after-years it never lost the impress of his genius ; so that Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius may be regarded as the lineal descendants of the Colophonian bard. Solon at a later date applied the elegiac measure to severer subjects. He was the first perhaps to use it for purely gnomic purposes, maintaining, however, the martial

* This seems to have been recognised by the ancients, as is proved by the lines quoted from Hermesianax in *Athenæus*, xiii. 597, where the epithet *μαλαχός*, assigned to his pentameter, is meant to be emphatic. Mimnermus gave it a luxurious and tender quality.

spirit in his Salaminian verses, and imitating the example of Mimnermus in his lighter compositions. Phocylides, to judge by the scanty fragments which we possess of his poems, was almost wholly gnomic in his character. But Theognis, who is the latest and most important of the elegiac writers of this period, combined the political, didactic, and erotic qualities to a remarkable degree. As a poet, Simonides was greater than any of those whom I have named; but his claims to rank among the sententious philosophers rest more upon the fragments of his lyrics than upon the elegiac epitaphs for which he was so justly famed.

These are the poets of whom I intend to speak in detail. Taken together with Homer and Hesiod, their works formed the body of a Greek youth's education at the time when Gorgias and Hippias were lecturing at Athens. From them the contemporaries of Pericles, when boys, had learned the rules of good society, of gentlemanly breeding, of practical morality, of worldly wisdom. Their saws and precepts were on the lips of the learned and the vulgar; wise men used them as the theses for subtle arguments or the texts for oratorical discourses. Public speakers quoted them as Scripture might be quoted in a synod of the clergy. They pointed remarks in after-dinner conversation or upon the market-place. Polemarchus, for instance, in Plato's *Republic*, starts the dialogue on Justice by a maxim of Simonides. Isocrates, the Rhetor, alludes to them as being "the best counsellors in respect of human affairs," and Xenophon terms the gnomes of Theognis "a comprehensive treatise concerning men." Having been used so commonly and largely by the instructors of youth, and by men of all conditions, it was natural that these elegies should be collected into one compendious form, and that passages of a gnomic tendency should be extracted from larger poems on different subjects. In this way a body of sententious poetry grew up and received the traditional

authority of Solon, Phocylides, Simonides, and Theognis. But in the process of compilation confusions and mistakes of all kinds occurred, so that the same couplets were often attributed to several authors. To bear this in mind at the outset is a matter of some moment ; for at this distance of time it is no longer possible to decide the canon of the several elegists with accuracy. In dealing with them, we must, therefore, not forget that we are handling masses of heterogeneous materials roughly assigned to a few great names.

The earliest elegiac poet was Callinus, a native of Ephesus, between the years 730 and 678 B.C. His poems consist almost exclusively of exhortations to bravery in battle. "How long will ye lie idle?" he exclaims; "put on your valour; up to the fight, for war is in the land!" He discourses in a bold and manly strain upon the certainty of death, and the glory of facing it in defence of home and country, winding up with this noble sentiment:—"The whole people mourns and sorrows for the death of a brave-hearted man; and while he lives he is the peer of demigods." The lines of Tyrtaeus, whose prominent part during the second Messenian war is the subject of a well-known legend, embody the same martial and patriotic sentiments in even more masculine verse.

It would be alien from my purpose to dwell long upon these military poems, since the only gnostic character which they display is the encouragement of a heightened honour, unselfishness, indifference to gain, devotion to the State, and love of public fame. Yet the moment in the history of Hellas represented by Tyrtaeus, the leader whose voice in the battle-field was like a clarion to his manly Spartans, and in the council-chamber was a whisper of Athene quelling strife, is so interesting that I cannot omit him in this place. "Never," to use the words of Müller, "was the duty and the honour of bravery impressed on the youth of a nation with so much beauty and force of language, by such natural and touching

motives." If of a truth it be, as Milton says, the function of the poet "to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility," then Tyrtaeus, less by his specific maxims than by the spirit that his verses breathe, deserves an honoured place among the bards whom Aristotle would have classed as ἡθικώτατοι, most serviceable for the formation of a virile and powerful temperament, most suited for the education of Greek youth. The following translation stands as Thomas Campbell made it from a martial elegy ascribed to the bard of Lacedæmon : *—

"How glorious fall the valiant, sword in hand,
In front of battle for their native land !
But oh ! what ills await the wretch that yields,
A recreant outcast from his country's fields !
The mother whom he loves shall quit her home,
An aged father at his side shall roam ;
His little ones shall weeping with him go,
And a young wife participate his woe ;
While scorned and scowled upon by every face,
They pine for food, and beg from place to place.

"Stain of his breed ! dishonouring manhood's form,
All ills shall cleave to him : affliction's storm
Shall blind him wandering in the vale of years,
Till, lost to all but ignominious fears,
He shall not blush to leave a recreant's name,
And children, like himself, inured to shame.

"But we will combat for our fathers' land,
And we will drain the life-blood where we stand,
To save our children :—fight ye side by side,
And serried close, ye men of youthful pride,
Disdaining fear, and deeming light the cost
Of life itself in glorious battle lost.

* Without attempting to discuss the vexed question whether Tyrtaeus was a native Spartan, or, according to the ancient tale, an Athenian naturalized in Sparta, his self-identification with the people he inspired justifies the phrase that I have used above.

"Leave not our sires to stem the unequal fight,
 Whose limbs are nerved no more with buoyant might ;
 Nor, lagging backward, let the younger breast
 Permit the man of age (a sight unblessed)
 To welter in the combat's foremost thrust,
 His hoary head dishevell'd in the dust,
 And venerable bosom bleeding bare.
 But youth's fair form, though fallen, is ever fair,
 And beautiful in death the boy appears,
 The hero boy, that dies in blooming years :
 In man's regret he lives, and woman's tears ;
 More sacred than in life, and lovelier far,
 For having perished in the front of war." *

Strangely different are the elegies of Mimnermus, the poet of Colophon, who flourished toward the end of the seventh century B.C.† His name has passed into a proverb for luxurious verse, saddened by reflections on the fleeting joys of youth, and on the sure and steady progress of old age and death. Tyrtaeus, though a native of Attica, wrote for Spartans at war with a strong nation ; Mimnermus was born and lived among Ionian Greeks emasculated by barbarian control and by contact with the soft Lydians. It was of these Colophonians that Xenophanes, a native poet, said, "Instructed in vain luxury

* The sentiment of these last lines is not only ethically spirited, but it is also singularly, exquisitely Greek. The æsthetic tact of the Greek race felt the plastic charm of a youth's form dead upon the battle-field. Like a statue marbled by the frost of death he lies, the perfection of life-moulded clay ; and his red wounds are the lips of everlasting praise. Not so the elder man. Nakedness and mutilation bring no honour to him ; he has no loveliness of shape to be revealed and heightened by the injuries of war ; for him the flowing beard and the robes of reverend eld are a majestic covering, to be withdrawn by no hand seeking to unveil secluded beauties. His lot is cast no longer in those fields, intense and passionate of art and love, where death, cropping the bloom unset, confers a crown of immortality. Cf. *Iliad*, xxii. 71. An echo of this Greek feeling for the beautiful young dead may be traced in David's picture of the drummer-boy at Avignon, in Walt Whitman, and in Lord Albemarle's 'Recollections of Waterloo.'

† The birthplace of Mimnermus is not very certain. Fragment 9 in Bergk's *Collection* would seem to justify the opinion that he was a native of Smyrna colonised from Colophon.

by the Lydians, they trailed their robes of purple through the streets, with haughty looks, proud of their flowing locks bedewed with curious essences and oils." For such a people the exquisitely soft and musical verses of Mimnermus, pervaded by a tone of lingering regret, were exactly suited. They breathe the air of sunny gardens and cool banquet-rooms, in which we picture to ourselves the poet lingering out a pensive life, endeavouring to crowd his hours with pleasures of all kinds, yet ever haunted and made fretful among his roses by the thought of wrinkles and death. "When your youth is gone," he says, "however beautiful you may have been, you lose the reverence of your children and the regard of your friends." "More hideous is old age than death. It reduces the handsome and the plain man to one level—cares attend it—the senses and the intellects get deadened—a man is forgotten and put out of the way." The Greek sentiment of hatred for old age is well expressed in one epithet which Mimnermus employs—*ἄμορφοι*, *formless*. The Greeks detested the ugliness and loss of grace which declining years bring with them, almost more than weakened powers or the approach of death. Nay, "when the flower of youth is past," says Mimnermus, "it is best to die at once." Men are like herbs, which flourish for a while in sunshine—then comes the winter of old age, with poverty or disease, or lack of children. His feeling for the charm of youth was intense; he expressed it in language that reminds us of the fervency of Sappho—"Down my flesh the sweat runs in rivers, and I tremble when I see the flower of my equals in age gladsome and beautiful."

This tender and regretful strain is repeated by Mimnermus with a monotonous, almost pathetic persistency, as if the one thought of inevitable age oppressed him like a nightmare day and night. His delight in the goodness of youth and manhood is so acute, and his enjoyment of existence is so exquisite, that he shrinks with loathing from the doom imposed

on all things mortal to decline and wither. "May I complete my life without disease or cares, and may death strike me at my sixtieth year!" Such is the prayer he utters, feeling, probably, that up to sixty the senses may still afford him some enjoyment, and that, after they are blunted, there is nothing left for man worth living for. In all this Mimnermus was true to one type of the Greek character. I shall have occasion further on to revert to this subject, and to dwell again upon the fascination which the flower of youth possessed for the Greeks, and the horror with which the ugliness of age inspired them.* That some escaped this kind of despair, which to us appears unmanly, may be gathered from the beautiful discourse upon old age with which the *Republic* of Plato opens. Mimnermus, however, belonged to a class of men different from Cephælus: nowhere in the whole range of literature can be found a more perfect specimen of unmitigated *ennui*.† In his verse we trace the prostrate tone of the Oriental, combined with Greek delicacy of intellect and artistic expression. The following passage may be cited as at once illustrative of his peculiar lamentation, and also of his poetical merits:—

"What's life or pleasure wanting Aphrodite?

When to the gold-haired goddess cold am I,
 When love and love's soft gifts no more delight me,
 Nor stolen dalliance, then I fain would die!
 Ah! fair and lovely bloom the flowers of youth;
 On men and maids they beautifully smile:
 But soon comes doleful eld, who, void of ruth,
 Indifferently afflicts the fair and vile:

* Notice particularly the couplets of Theognis beginning ὧμοι ἐγὼν ἡβης and ἀφρονες ἄνθρωποι, Bergk, vol. ii. pp. 420, 550.

† Fragment 9 in Bergk's *Collection* might seem to express a manlier spirit, if we could suppose that it referred to personal exploits of the poet. It forms, however, part of a description of the early colonization of Smyrna from Pylos; when Mimnermus alludes to martial deeds, he does so with a tone of regret, as one who has no share in them, and lives his own life in political stagnation.

Then cares wear out the heart ; old eyes forlorn
 Scarce reckon the very sunshine to behold—
 Unloved by youths, of every maid the scorn,—
 So hard a lot God lays upon the old.” *

We are not surprised to hear that the fragments of Mimnermus belonged to a series of elegies addressed to a flute-player called Nanno.† They are worthy of such a subject. Nanno, according to one account, did not return the passion of the poet.

In Mimnermus, however luxurious he may have been, we yet observe a vein of meditation upon life and destiny, which prepares us for the more distinctly gnomic poets. Considered in the light of Greek philosophy, Mimnermus anticipates the ethical teaching of the Hedonists and Epicureans. In other words, he represents a genuine view of life adopted by the Greeks. Horace refers to him as an authority in these well-known lines :—

“ Si, Mimnermus uti censet, sine amore jocisque
 Nil est jucundum, vivas in amore jocisque ; ” *

on which the scholiast observed that the elegiac poet “ agreed with the sect of the Epicureans.”

Next to Mimnermus in point of time is Solon. Perhaps the verses of this great man were among his least important productions. Yet their value, in illustrating the history of Athens, would have been inestimable, had they been preserved to us in a more perfect state. “ There is hardly anything,” says Grote, “ more to be deplored, amidst the lost treasures of the

* *Miscellanies*, by the late John Addington Symonds, M.D. (Macmillan & Co. 1871), p. 410.

† Strabo quotes “ the Nanno ” as Athenæus quotes “ the Leontion ” of Hermesianax, another Colophonian amourist.

‡ *Epistles*, bk. i. 6. Translated thus by Conington : “ If, as Mimnermus tells you, life is flat with nought to love, devote yourself to that.”

Grecian mind, than the poems of Solon ; for we see by the remaining fragments that they contained notices of the public and social phenomena before him, which he was compelled attentively to study, blended with the touching expression of his own personal feelings, in the post, alike honourable and difficult, to which the confidence of his countrymen had exalted him." The interest of Solon as a gnostic poet is derived chiefly from the fact that he was reckoned one of the seven wise men of Greece, that he was one of the two most distinguished Nomothetæ of Hellas, that he is said to have conversed familiarly with the great Lydian monarch, and that he endeavoured at Athens to resist the growing tyranny of Pisistratus. Thus Solon bore a prominent part in all the most important affairs of the period to which the gnostic poetry belongs. Its politics, diplomacy, and social theories, its constitutional systems and philosophy, were perfectly familiar to him, and received a strong impress from his vigorous mind. It is thought that his poems belong to an early period of his life ; yet they embody the same sentiments as those which Herodotus refers to his old age, and express in the looser form of elegiac verse the gist of apophthegms ascribed to him as one of the seven sages.

Literature and politics were cultivated together at this period among the Greeks ; philosophy was gained in actual life and by commerce with men of all descriptions. The part which Tyrtaeus, Alcæus, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, and Archilochus played in the history of their States need not be more than alluded to. Simonides of Amorgos founded a colony ; Theognis represented a large and important party. But Solon, in a truer sense than any of these men, combined decisive action in public life with letters. Nor is it, perhaps, necessary to agree with Grote in depreciating the poetical value of his verses. Some of them are very fine and forcible. The description, for example, of the storm which sweeps away

the clouds, and leaves a sunny sky (Frag. 13, ed. Bergk), is full of noble imagery.

The first three fragments of Solon's elegies form part of the ode recited by him in the market-place of Athens, when he braved the penalty of death, and urged his fellow-citizens "to rise and fight for the sweet isle of Salamis." These lines are followed by a considerable fragment of great importance, describing the misery of ill-governed and seditious Athens. Among the sayings attributed to Solon (Diog. Laer., i. 63) is one that gives the keynote to this poem. When asked what made an orderly and well-constituted state, he answered, "When the people obey the rulers, and the rulers obey the laws." The paraphrase which I subjoin exhibits in strong contrast the difference between *Dysnomia* and *Eunomia*, as conceived by the Athenian law-giver. Demosthenes, who used the name of Solon on all occasions with imposing rhetorical effect, quotes these lines in a celebrated passage of the speech *De Fals. Leg.*, 254 :—"The citizens seek to overthrow the State by love of money, by following indulgent and self-seeking demagogues, who neglect religion and pervert the riches of the temples. Yet justice, silent but all-seeing, will in time bring vengeance on them for these things. War, want, civil discord, slavery, are at our gates ; and all these evils threaten Athens because of her lawlessness. Whereas good laws and government set all the State in order, chain the hands of evil-doers, make rough places plain, subdue insolence, and blast the budding flowers of Até, set straight the crooked ways of tortuous law, root out sedition, quell the rage of strife ; under their good influence all things are fair and wise with men." Thus early and emphatically was the notion of just balance enunciated among the Greeks. It formed the ruling principle of their philosophy as well as of their politics ; for the *μηδὲν ἄγαν* (nothing over-much) of Solon corresponded to the *μέτρον* (measure) of the Ionic speculators, and contained within itself

the germ of Aristotle's ethical system, no less than of the political philosophy of Plato's *Republic*.

In the fifth and sixth fragments Solon describes the amount of power he would wish to see intrusted to the Athenian Demus ; in the ninth, he prophesies the advent of a despot : "From storm-clouds descend furious snow and hail, and thunder is born of bright lightning ; so great men produce the overthrow of States, and into the bondage of a despot's power the people fall unwittingly. Easy it is to raise the storm, but hard to curb the whirlwind ; yet must we now take thought of all these things." Fragment the second contains a further warning on the subject of impending tyranny. The power of Pisistratus was growing to a head, and Solon told the Athenians that if he proved despotic, they would have no one but themselves to blame for it.

The remaining fragments of Solonian poetry are more purely meditative. "Bright daughters of Memory and Olympian Zeus," he begins, "Pierian Muses ! hear my prayer. Grant me wealth from the blessed gods, and from all men a good name. May I be sweet to my friend and bitter to my foe ; revered by the one and dreaded by the other. Money I desire, but no ill-gotten gain : for the wealth that the gods give lasts, and fleets not away ; but the fruits of insolence and crime bring vengeance—sure, though slow. Zeus seeth all things, and like a wind scattering the clouds, which shakes the deep places of the sea and rages over the corn-land, and comes at last to heaven, the seat of gods, and makes a clear sky to be seen, whereupon the sun breaks out in glory, and the clouds are gone—so is the vengeance of Zeus. He may seem to forget, but sooner or later he strikes ; perchance the guilty man escapes, yet his blameless children or remote posterity pay the penalty." Two points are noticeable in this passage ; first, the dread of ill-gotten gain ; and secondly, the conception of implacable justice. There was nothing which the Greeks more

dreaded and detested than wealth procured by fraud. They were so sensitive upon this point that even Plato and Aristotle regarded usury as criminal, unnatural, and sure to bring calamity upon the money-lender. Thus Chilon, the Lacedemonian sage, is reported to have said, "Choose loss rather than dishonourable gain : for the one will hurt you for the moment, the other will never cease to be a curse." There are few of the seven sages who have not at least one maxim bearing on this point. It would seem as if the conscience of humanity were touched at a very early period by superstitious scruples of this kind. The Jewish law contains warnings similar to those of Solon ; and among our own people it has been commonly believed that wealth unlawfully acquired, money taken from the devil, or property wrested from the Church, is disastrous to its owner, and incapable of being long retained in the possession of his family. Theognis expresses nearly the same sentiments as Solon in the following verses :—"He who gets wealth from Zeus by just means, and with hands unstained, will not lose it ; but if he acquire it wrongfully, covetously, or by false swearing, though it may seem at first to bring him gain, at last it turns to calamity, and the mind of Heaven prevails. But these things deceive men, for the blessed gods do not always take vengeance on crime at the moment of its being committed ; but one man in his person pays for a bad deed, another leaves disaster hanging over his own children, a third avoids justice by death."

Both Solon and Theognis, it will be observed, express emphatically their belief in a vengeance of Heaven falling upon the children, and the children's children of offenders. This conception of doom received its most splendid illustration at the hands of the tragic poets, and led philosophers like Empedocles to devise systems of expiation and purification, by means of which ancestral guilt might be purged away, and the soul be restored to its pristine blamelessness. Theognis in another

fragment (731-752) discusses the doctrine, and calls in question its justice. He takes it for granted, as a thing too obvious to be disputed, that children suffer for their father's sin, and argues with Zeus about the abstract right and policy of this law, suggesting that its severity is enough to make men withdraw their allegiance from such unjust governors. The inequality of the divine rule had appeared in the same light to Hesiod and Homer (see *Iliad*, xiii. 631; Hesiod, *Op. et Dies*, 270). * But it is in the gnomic poets that we first discover a tendency to return and reason upon such questions: the wedge of philosophical scepticism was being inserted into the old beliefs of the Greek race. In some respects these gnomic poets present even a more gloomy view of human destinies than the epic poets. Solon says, "It is fate that bringeth good and bad to men; nor can the gifts of the immortals be refused;" and in Theognis we find, "No man is either wealthy or poor, mean or noble, without the help of the gods." . . . "Pray to the gods; nought happens to man of good or ill without the gods." . . . "No one, Cynus, is himself the cause of loss and gain; but of both these the gods are givers."* It would be easy to multiply passages, where the same conception of the divine government as that for which Plato (*Rep.*, p. 379) blamed Homer is set forth; but the gnomic poets go beyond this simple view. They seem to regard Heaven as a jealous power, and superstitiously believe all changes of fortune to be produced by the operation of a god anxious to delude human expectations. This theology lies at the base of the Solonian maxim, that you ought not to judge of a man's happiness until his death: "for," in the

* The well-known passage in the *Iliad* (xxiv. 527), which describes the two casks at the threshold of the house of Zeus, contains the germ of this belief. But after Homer there arose a darker sense of the jealousy of the gods, accompanied in speculative minds by a tendency to call the principles of the divine rule in question.

language of Herodotus, "there are many to whom God has first displayed good fortune, and whom he afterwards has rooted up and overthrown."

Thus Solon moralizes in his elegies upon the vicissitudes of life:—"Danger lies everywhere, nor can a man say where he will end when he begins; for he who thinks to do well, without forethought, comes to grief; and often when a man is doing ill, Heaven sends him good luck, and he ends prosperously." It must however be observed that Solon in no passage of his elegiac poems alludes distinctly to the intervention of a jealous or malicious destiny. He is rather deeply impressed with the uncertainty of human affairs—an uncertainty which the events of his own life amply illustrated, and which he saw displayed in every town about him. Simonides repeats the same strain of despondency, dwelling (*Frag. 2*, ed. Gaisford) upon the mutabilities of life, and exclaiming with a kind of horror: "One hideous Charybdis swallows all things—wealth and mighty virtue."

At this period in Greece the old simplicity of life was passing away, and philosophy had not yet revealed her broader horizons, her loftier aims, and her rational sources of content. We have seen how Mimnermus bemoaned the woes of old age. Solon, whose manliness contrasts in every other respect with the effeminacy and languor of the Colophonian poet, gave way to the same kind of melancholy when he cried, "No mortal man is truly blessed; but all are wretched whom the sun beholds." What can be more despairing than the lamentations of Simonides?—"Few and evil are our days of life; but everlasting is the sleep which we must sleep beneath the earth." . . . "Small is the strength of man, and invincible are his sorrows; grief treads upon the heels of grief through his short life; and death, which no man shuns, hangs over him at last: to this bourne come the good and bad alike." In the midst of this uncertainty and gloom Theognis cannot find a

rule of right conduct. "Nothing," he says, "is defined by Heaven for mortals, nor any way by which a man may walk and please immortal powers." Nor can we point to any more profoundly wretched expression of misery than the following elegy of the same poet : "It is best of all things for the sons of earth not to be born, nor to see the bright rays of the sun, or else after birth to pass as soon as possible the gates of death, and to lie deep down beneath a weight of earth." This sentiment is repeated by Bacchylides, and every student of Greek tragedy knows what splendid use has been made of it by Sophocles in one of the choruses of *Œdipus Coloneus*. Afterwards it passed into a commonplace. Two Euripidean fragments embody it in words not very different from those of Theognis, and Cicero is said to have translated it. When we consider the uneasy and uncertain view of human life expressed in these passages, it seems wonderful that men, conscious of utter ignorance, and believing themselves, like Herodotus, to be the sport of almost malignant deities, could have grown so nobly and maintained so high a moral standard as that of the Greek race.*

The remaining fragments of Solon contain the celebrated lines upon the Life of Man, which he divided into ten periods of seven years. He rebuked Mimnermus for wishing to make sixty the term of human life, and bade him add another decade. We also possess some amorous verses of questionable character, supposed to have been written in his early youth. The prudes of antiquity were scandalized at Solon, a lawgiver and sage, for having penned these couplets. The libertines rejoiced to place so respectable a name upon their list of worthies. To the student of history they afford, in a compact

* This subject will be resumed in the introduction to my chapter on Euripides, where I attempt to show how the Herodotean notion of divine jealousy was moralized at the time of the Persian war into the idea of Nemesis.

form, some insight into the pursuits and objects of an Athenian man of pleasure. Plato quotes one couplet in the *Lysis*, and the author of the dialogue *περὶ ἐρώτων* (On Loves), attributed to Lucian, makes use of the same verses to prove that Solon was not exempt from the passion for which he is apologizing. Apuleius mentions another as "lascivissimus ille versus." It should be added that the most considerable of these elegies has also been ascribed to Theognis. The doubt of authorship which hangs over all the gnostic fragments warns us, therefore, to be cautious in ascribing them to Solon. At the same time there is no strong external or internal argument against their authenticity. Solon displays no asceticism in his poetry, or in anything that is recorded of his life or sayings.* It is probable that he lived as a Greek among Greeks, and was not ashamed of any of their social customs.

Passing from Solon to Phocylides we find a somewhat different tone of social philosophy. Phocylides was a native of Miletus, who lived between 550 and 490 B.C. If Mimnermus represents the effeminacy of the Asiatic Greeks, Phocylides displays a kind of prosaic worldly wisdom, for which the Ionians were celebrated. He is thoroughly *bourgeois*, to use a modern phrase; contented with material felicity, shrewd, safe in his opinions, and gifted with great common sense. Here are some of his maxims:—"First get your living, and then think of getting virtue." . . . "What is the advantage of noble birth, if favour follow not the speech and counsel of a man?" . . . "The middle classes are in many ways best off; I wish to be of middle rank in the State." Aristotle (*Pol.*, iv. 9, 7), quotes the last of these sayings with approbation. It is a thoroughly Ionian sentiment. Two of his genuine fragments contain the germ of Greek ideas afterwards destined to be widely developed and applied by the greatest thinkers of

* See the passage quoted from *Philemon* by Athenæus, xiii. 569, where the institution of public *lupanaria* is ascribed to Solon.

Greece. One of these describes the Greek conception of a perfect State :—"A small city, set upon a rock, and well governed, is better than all foolish Nineveh." We here recognize the practical wisdom and thorough solidity of Greek good sense. Wealth, size, and splendour they regarded as stumbling-blocks and sources of weakness. To be compact and well governed expressed their ideal of social felicity. Plato in the *Republic*, and Aristotle in the *Politics*, carry the thought expressed in this couplet of Phocylides to its utmost logical consequences. Again he says, "In justice the whole of virtue exists entire." This verse, which has also been incorporated into the elegies of Theognis, was probably the common property of many early moralists. Aristotle quotes it in the fifth book of the *Ethics* with the preface : Διὸ καὶ παροιμιαζόμενοι φάμεν (wherefore in a proverb too we say). It might be placed as a motto on the first page of Plato's *Republic*, for justice is the architectonic virtue which maintains the health and safety of the State.

Phocylides enjoyed a high reputation among the ancients. Though few genuine fragments of his sayings have been handed down to us, there is a long and obviously spurious poem which bears his name. Some moralist of the Christian period has endeavoured to claim for his half-Jewish precepts the sanction of a great and antique authority. The greater number of those which we may with safety accept as genuine are prefaced by the words καὶ τόγε Φωκυλίδεω (and this too of Phocylides), forming an integral part of a hexameter. Phocylides was author of an epigram in imitation of one ascribed to Demodocus, which is chiefly interesting as having furnished Porson with the model of his well-known lines on Hermann. He also composed an epigrammatic satire on women, in which he compares them to four animals, a dog, a bee, a pig, and a horse, in the style of the poem by Simonides of Amorgos.

Xenophanes, a native of Colophon, and the founder of the

Eleatic school of philosophy, has left some elegies of a gnomic character, which illustrate another point in the Ionian intellect. While Phocylides celebrated the superiority of comfort and the solid goods of life, Xenophanes endeavoured to break down the prejudice in favour of mere physical advantages, and to assert the absolute pre-eminence of intellectual power. In his second fragment (ed. Bergk) he says, "You give all kinds of honours—precedence at festivals, pensions, and public maintenance—to runners, boxers, pentathletes, wrestlers, pancratists, and charioteers, who bear away the prize at Olympia ; yet these men are not so worthy of reward as I am ; for better than the strength of men or horses is our wisdom. What is the use of all this muscular development? It will not improve the constitution of the State or increase the revenue."* In this paraphrase, I have, for the sake of brevity, modernized the language of Xenophanes, while seeking to preserve the meaning of an elegy which admirably illustrates the principles of the Ionian race, and of Athens in particular, as contrasted with those of the Dorians. Plato, Aristotle, and all the political moralists of Greece, blamed Sparta and Thebes for training mere soldiers and gymnasts, to the exclusion of intellectual culture ; thus retarding the growth of their constitutions and forcing them to depend in all emergencies upon brute force. Had all Ionians been like Solon and Xenophanes, had there been nothing of Mimnermus or Phocylides in their character, then the Athenians might have avoided the contrary charge of effeminacy and ignobility of purpose and merely æsthetical superiority, with which they have been taxed.

Contemporary with Phocylides was Theognis, a poet of whose gnomic elegies nearly fourteen hundred lines are still extant. Some of these are identical with verses of Solon, and

* We may compare with this fragment a passage preserved from the *Autolycus* of Euripides, translated by me in the Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets*, chap. viii. p. 283.

of other writers ; yet we need not suppose that Theognis was himself an imitator. It is far more probable that all the gnomic poets borrowed from the same sources, or embodied in their couplets maxims of common and proverbial wisdom. That Aristotle so regarded one of their most important aphorisms on the architectonic supremacy of justice, we have already seen. Besides, it is not certain on what principle the elegies which bear the names of different poets, were assigned to them. Theognis covers more ground than any of his predecessors, and embraces a greater variety of subjects. It has never been imagined that the fragments we possess formed part of an elaborate and continuous poem. They rather seem to have been written as occasion served, in order to express the thoughts of the moment ; while not a few included in the canon of Theognis belong probably to other poets. Many of them contain maxims of political wisdom, and rules for private conduct in the choice of friends ; others seem to have been composed for the lyre, in praise of good society, or wine, or beauty ; again we find discussions of moral questions, and prayers to the gods, mixed up with lamentations on the miseries of exile and poverty ; a few throw light upon the personal history of Theognis ; in all cases the majority are addressed to one person, called Cynus.*

* A very ingenious attempt was made by Mr. Hookham Frere to reconstruct the life of Theognis from his elegies. It would be too much to assert that his conjectures are always successful. Indeed he often introduces foreign matter and modern sentiment, while he neglects the peculiarly Greek relations of the poet to his friend. Those who are curious about such works of hypercriticism would do well to study his *Theognis Restitutus*. (Frere's Works, vol. ii.) In doing so, they must, however, bear in mind, as already observed above, that a great many of the couplets and short poems ascribed to Theognis by the later Greeks were not really his own. Theognis, like Hesiod, Solon, and Phocylides, was credited with more proverbial wisdom than he can be held responsible for. Contradictory utterances are therefore not unfrequent in his elegies, and this fact renders a trustworthy restoration of his biography and body of opinion almost impossible.

Theognis was a noble, born at Megara about the middle of the sixth century B.C. His city, though traditionally subject to the yoke of Corinth, had under the influence of its aristocracy acquired independence. In course of time Theagenes, a demagogue, gained for himself despotical supremacy, and exiled the members of the old nobility from Megara. He, too, succumbed to popular force, and for many years a struggle was maintained between the democratic party, whom Theognis persistently styles *κακοὶ* and *δειλοί* (bad and cowardly), and the aristocracy, whom he calls *ἀγαθοὶ* and *ἑσθλοί* (good and stanch). Theognis himself, as far as we can gather from the fragments, spent a long portion of his life in exile from Megara; but before the period of his banishment he occupied the position of friend and counsellor to Cynos, who, though clearly younger than himself, seems to have been in some sense leader of the Megarian aristocracy. A large number of the maxims of Theognis on State-government are specially addressed to him.

Before proceeding to examine these elegies in detail, we may touch upon the subject of the friendship of Theognis for Cynos, which has been much misunderstood. It must be remembered that Theognis was the only Doric poet of the gnostic class—all those who have been hitherto mentioned, belonging without exception to the Ionian family of the Greek race. We are not, therefore, surprised to find some purely Dorian qualities in the poetry of Theognis. Such, for instance, are the invocations to Phœbus and Artemis, with which our collection of fragments opens; but such, in a far more characteristic sense, is the whole relation of the poet to his friend. From time immemorial it had been the custom among the Dorian tribes for men distinguished in war or statecraft to select among the youths one comrade, who stood to them in the light of pupil and squire. In Crete this process of election was attended with rites of peculiar solemnity, and at Sparta the names of *εἰσπνήλης* and *ἀίτης*, or “inbreather”

and "listener," were given to the pair. They grew up together, the elder teaching the younger all he knew, and expecting to receive from him in return obedience and affection. In manhood they were not separated, but fought and sat in the assembly side by side, and were regarded in all points as each other's representatives. Thus a kind of chivalry was formed, which, like the modern chivalry of love and arms, as long as it remained within due limits, gave birth to nothing but honourable deeds and noble friendships, but which in more degenerate days became the curse and reproach of Hellas. There is every reason to believe that Theognis was united to Cynrus in the purest bonds of Doric chivalry; and it is interesting to observe the kind of education which he gives his friend (see 1049-1054, *Theogn.*, ed. Bergk). Boys in the Doric States were so soon separated from their home, and from the training of the family, that some substitute for the parental discipline and care was requisite. This the institution to which I have briefly alluded seems to have to some extent supplied. A Spartan or Cretan settlement resembled a large public school, in which the elder boys choose their fags, and teach them and protect them, in return for duty, service and companionship.

Lines 87-100 describe the sincere and perfect affection, the truthfulness and forbearance, which the poet requires from Cynrus. In another passage (1259-1270) he complains of the changeable character of the youth, and compares him to a skittish horse. One of his longest, and, in point of poetry, most beautiful elegies, celebrates the immortality which his songs will confer on Cynrus (237-254). He tells his friend that he has given him wings to fly with over land and sea, that fair young men at festivals will sing of him to sweetly-sounding pipes, and that even Hades shall not prevent him from wandering on wings of fame about the isles and land of Hellas so long as earth and sun endure. The lofty enthusiasm and confidence of these promises remind us of Shakspeare's most pompous

sonnets. Again, he bewails the difficulties and dangers of this kind of friendship (1353 and 1369), or entreats Cynrus not to let malicious slanders interrupt their intimacy. In some cases we cannot acquit Theognis any more than Solon of licentiousness in the expression of his love. But the general tone of his language addressed to Cynrus is so dignified and sober that we are inclined to think his looser verses may refer to another and more scandalous attachment.

The first elegy of great importance (43-69) describes the state of Megara when under the control of a democracy. It expresses the bitter hatred and contempt which the Greek nobles in a Dorian State felt for the Pericæci, or farmers of the neighbouring country, whom they strove to keep beneath them, and to exclude from all political rights:—"Cynrus, this city is still a city, but the people are all changed, who some time since knew neither law nor justice, but wore goatskins, and dwelt like deer beyond the walls. Now they are noble, son of Polypas; and the brave of heretofore are base. Who can endure to look upon these things?" Again he says (1109-1114), "The nobles of old days are now made base, and the base are noble, . . . a man of birth takes his bride from a low man's house." In another place he complains that the rabble rule the State with monstrous laws, that the sense of shame has perished, and that impudence and insolence lord it over the land (289-292). In these perilous times he compares the State to a ship managed by incompetent and unruly mariners: the waves are breaking over her, but the sailors prevent the good pilot from guiding her helm, while they make pillage of the common good (667-682). This simile bears a striking resemblance to the passage of the *Republic* in which Plato compares a State possessed by demagogues and the mob to an ill-governed ship. Lastly, says Theognis, "Porters rule, and the nobles are subject to the base." In this state of disorder the very principles of Dorian society are neglected. Money is

regarded as the charter of nobility, and no attempts are made to maintain a generous breed of citizens. "We are careful," he says (183-196), "to select the best race of horses and the like, but a noble man doubts not about marrying a mean woman if she bring him money; nor does a woman reject the suit of a mean man if he be rich. Wealth is honoured; wealth has confused our blood." This passage has great interest, both as showing the old prejudices of the Dorian aristocracy, and also as proving that a new order of things was beginning in Greece. Even the Dorian States could not resist the progress of commerce and republican institutions; and little Megara, situated between mercantile Corinth and democratic Athens, had but small strength to stem the tide. But the party of Theognis were not always out of power. When Cynus and his friends held sway in Megara, he gives them this advice (847-850): "Trample on the empty-headed rabble; strike them with the stinging goad; and put a galling yoke upon their neck; for never shall you find so despot-loving a Demus in the whole earth." That he had frequent cause to apprehend the rising of some tyrant from the body of the people may be noticed in the fragments. Among the earliest of these in our arrangement (39-42) occurs this elegy:—"Cynus, this city is pregnant; but I fear that it will bring forth a man to chastise our evil violence." He then proceeds to lay down the axioms of the oligarchical State theory: the nobility, he says, never ruined a city; it is only when base leaders get the upper hand, and wrest justice in order to indulge the populace and make their own gain, that civil dissension and ruin ensue. Tyrants were as hateful to the true oligarchs as a democracy, and Theognis in one place actually advises tyrannicide: "To lay low a despot who consumes the people is no sin, and will not be punished by the gods" (1181). This sentiment corresponds with the couplet of Simonides on Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and with the apophthegms of several of the sages.

Theognis, seeing Cynus environed with political difficulties, thought fit to furnish him with rules of conduct. He was very particular about the choice of proper friends. One elegy (31-38), in which he discourses on the desirability of consorting with none but the best company, and of avoiding the contagion of low comrades, attained a wide celebrity among the Greeks. So much of their life was spent in public, and so much of their education depended on society, that the question of social intercourse was one of paramount importance. Plato in the *Meno*, Xenophon in his *Memorabilia*, and Aristotle in the ninth book of the *Ethics*, all make use of these verses:—

“Come not into the company of bad men, but cling always to the good; eat and drink with them; sit with them, and seek to please those who have great power. For from the noble you will learn what is noble; but if you mix with base men you will lose the wits you have.” It must always be borne in mind that by ἐσθλοὶ and ἀγαθοὶ Theognis meant the men of his own party. The “good” and “noble” were men of birth, wealth, breeding, and power, on whom, by prejudice and habit, he conferred these moral titles. In course of time, however, as the words acquired a more ethical significance, the philosophers were able to appropriate maxims of worldly prudence to their own more elevated purposes; nor were they even in the times of Theognis other than ambiguous, for the identification of aristocratic position and moral worth was so conventionally complete, that words which were intended to be taken in the one sense had an equal application in the other. In another elegy (305-308) Theognis repeats this advice, when he observes that no one is born utterly bad by nature, but that he contracts habits of depravity from his associates. Here it is obvious how much of ethical meaning the words “good” and “bad” involved, even in the times of the Megarian poet, and how vastly important he considered the society of well-bred companions to be in the

formation of character. A different view of moral habits seems to be taken in another fragment (429-438), where Theognis attributes more influence to nature than to training:—"To beget and rear a child," he says, "is easier than to instil good principles. No one ever devised means for making fools wise, or bad men good. If Heaven had given to the sons of Æsculapius the gift of healing wickedness and folly, great fees would they have earned. If you could fashion or insert what minds you liked, good men would never have bad sons. But no amount of teaching will make a bad man good." These verses are quoted both by Plato and Aristotle, with whose inquiries on the subject of Education *versus* Nature, of τροφή as opposed to φύσις, they had, of course, considerable correspondence.

In connection with this subject of moral habits and companionship, Theognis thought fit to give his pupil advice about his deportment at the public dinners of the Dorians. At these social meetings there was ample scope for political intrigue; and hence it followed that a public man was forced to be particular about his associates. The poet devotes a series of couplets (61-82) to this point, recommending Cynus to be reticent, and not to communicate the whole of his plans even to his friends. He warns him how difficult it is to get a faithful friend. You could not find, he says (83-86), one shipload of really trustworthy and incorruptible men upon the face of the world. Moreover, nothing requires more skill than to discover the insincerity of a hypocrite (117-128). You may test gold and silver, but there are no means of getting at the thoughts of men. This sentiment, together with the metaphor of pinchbeck metal, is used by Euripides in *Medea* (line 515). Aristotle also quotes the passage in his Eudemian *Ethics* (vii. 2). Time, however, says Theognis (963-970), and experience, and calamity, are the true tests of friendship. If a man will bear misfortune with you, or will help you in a serious

undertaking, you may then, but not till then, rely upon his expressions of attachment. This suspicious temper recalls the social philosophy of Machiavelli; indeed, Greek politics in no respect resembled those of modern Italy more closely than in the diplomatic footing upon which all the relations of society were placed. There are two very curious passages (213-218 and 1071-1074) in which Theognis bids his friend be as much as possible all things to all men. "Turn a different side of your character," he says, "to different men, and mix part of their temper with your own. Get the nature of the cuttlefish, which looks exactly like the rock it clings to: be versatile, and show a variety of complexions." Again, he boasts that "among madmen I am exceeding mad; but among the just no man is more just than I am." Nor is this subtlety to be confined to friendly relations merely. In one most Jesuitical couplet (363) Theognis urges his friend "to beguile his foe with fair words; but when he has him in his power, to take full vengeance and to spare not." As to the actual events of the life of Cynus, we know nothing except what is told us in one of the elegies (805-810), that he went as a Theorus to the shrine of Delphi. We may gather from some expressions of the poet that he was of a rash and haughty and unconciliatory temper.

Passing now to the personal history of Theognis, we are struck with his frequent lamentations over poverty and the wretchedness of exile. "Miserable poverty!" he cries, "go elsewhere; prithee stay not with a host that hates thee." "Poverty breaks the spirit of a noble man more than anything, more even than age or age. The poor man is gagged and bound; he cannot speak or act. . . . Poverty comes not to the market or the lawsuits; everywhere she is laughed and scoffed at, and hated by all men. . . . mother she is of helplessness: she breaks the spirit of a man within his breast, so that he suffers shame and wrong in silence, and learns to lie

and cheat and do the sin his soul abhors. . . . Wretched want, why, seated on my shoulders, dost thou debase body and mind alike" (267, 351, 385, 173-182, 649). Wealth, on the other hand, he cries with bitterness, is omnipotent (1117): "O wealth! of gods the fairest and most full of charm! with thy help, though I am a mean man, I am made noble." "Every one honours a rich man and slights a poor man: the whole world agrees upon this point." But the finest and most satirical of all his poems on this subject is one (699-718) in which he says: "Most men have but one virtue, and that is wealth; it would do you no good if you had the self-control of Rhadamanthus himself, or if you knew more wiles than Sisyphus, or if you could turn falsehood into truth with the tongue of a Nestor, or if you were more fleet of foot than the children of Boreas. You must fix your mind on wealth—wealth alone. Wealth is almighty." It was poverty that gave its bitterness to exile. My friends, he says, pass me by; "no one is the friend or faithful comrade of an exile. This is the sting of exile." "I have suffered what is as bad as death, and worse than anything besides. My friends have refused me the assistance which they owed, and I am forced to try my foes" (811-814). Hope, which has always been the food and sustenance of exiles, alone remained to him. There is one beautiful elegy (1135-1150) in which he imitates Hesiod, singing how faith and temperance and the graces have left the earth, how oaths are broken and religion is neglected, how holiness hath passed away; yet, if a pious man remain, let him wait on Hope, to Hope pray always, to Hope sacrifice first and last.

Verses 825-830 and 1197-1202 describe his condition while living as a poor man, stripped of his paternal farms, in Megara. The voice of the harvest-bird brings him sorrow, for he knows that other men will reap his fields. How can he pipe or sing, when from the market-place he sees his own land made the prey of revellers? The same sense of the *res angusta*

domi is expressed in the welcome to Clearistus. We gather from another elegy (261-266) that Theognis had lost not only his land, but also a girl to whom he was betrothed. Her parents gave her in marriage to a man less noble and less worthy than himself. Nor do we fail to get some insight into his domestic circumstances. Mr. Frere explains one fragment (271-278), full of Lear's indignation, by conjecturing that Theognis had left a wife and children behind him at Megara during his wanderings, and had returned to find them estranged and thankless. He translates the fragment thus :—

“One single evil, more severe and rude
 Than age or sickness or decrepitude,
 Is dealt unequally, for him that rears
 A thankless offspring ; in his latter years,
 Ungratefully requited for his pains,
 A parsimonious life and thrifty gains,
 With toil and care acquired for their behoof ;
 And no return ! but insolent reproof ;
 Such as might scare a beggar from the gate,
 A wretch unknown, poor and importunate !
 To be reviled, avoided, hated, curst ;
 This is the last of evils, and the worst ! ”

The same kind of ingenious conjecture supplies us with a plausible explanation of some obscure couplets (1211-1216), in which it appears that Theognis, having been taunted by a female slave, replied by making most sarcastic remarks on the servile physiognomy, and by boasting that among all his miseries he had remained a free man and a noble-minded gentleman. He often bids his soul be strong and bear bad fortune, like Ulysses when he cried, *τέτλαθι δὴ κραδίη καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης*.* Nor does he fail to ease his heart by praying for vengeance, and indulging the hope that he may live to drink the blood of his foes (349), and to divide their property among his friends (562). That he was kindly entertained in the various

* “Be stout, O heart of mine : ere now thou hast endured even more grimly grief than this.”

States he visited, he tells us ; and it is thought that he received the citizenship of Hyblæan Megara. Sicily, Eubœa, and Sparta (783-788) are specially mentioned by him as his homes in exile. Wherever he went he carried with him fame, and found a welcome. "Yet," says the poet, "no joy of those fair lands entered my soul, so far was anything from seeming dearer than my native land."

Among the elegies of general interest attributed to Theognis, none is more beautiful than the following hymn to the goddesses of Song and Beauty, which has been very elegantly rendered into English verse :—

"Muses and graces ! daughters of high Jove,
 When erst you left your glorious seats above
 To bless the bridal of that wondrous pair,
 Cadmus and Harmonia fair,
 Ye chanted forth a divine air :
 'What is good and fair
 Shall ever be our care.'
 Thus the burden of it rang :
 'That shall never be our care
 Which is neither good nor fair.'
 Such were the words your lips immortal sang."*

The very essence of the Greek feeling for the beautiful is expressed in these simple lines. Beauty, goodness, and truth were to the Greeks almost convertible terms ; and the nearest approach which Plato made to the conception of a metaphysical deity was called by him the *ἰδέα τοῦ καλοῦ*. Not less Greek is the sentiment expressed in the following lines (1027) :—"Easy among men is the practice of wickedness, but hard, friend Cynus, is the method of goodness." Theognis here expresses very prosaically what Hesiod and Simonides have both enunciated in noble verse (*Op. et Dies*, 285-290, and Simonides, Frag. 15, ed. Gaisford). It is noticeable that in his couplet τὸ ἀγαθὸν is used instead of ἀρετή. The thought, how-

* *Miscellanies*, by the late John Addington Symonds, M.D., p. 411.

ever, is the same ; nor does it differ widely from that which is contained in the Aristotelian "Hymn to Virtue," where we see that what the Greeks meant by this word, included not only moral rectitude, but also the labour of a Hercules, and all noble or patriotic deeds which implied self-devotion to a great cause.

The occasions for which the elegies of this class were composed by Theognis seem to have been chiefly banquets and drinking parties. In the Dorian States of Greece it was customary for men to form select clubs, which met together after the public meals for the purpose of drinking, conversing, and enjoying music. These friendly societies formed an appendix to the national *φειδίτια*, or public tables. Great care was taken in the selection of members, who were admitted by ballot ; and in time the clubs acquired political importance. Periander is said (*Ar. Pol.*, v. 9, 2) to have abolished them in Corinth because they proved favourable to aristocracy—no doubt by keeping up the old Doric traditions which he took pains to break down. In the verses of Theognis we are introduced to many members of his club by name—Onomacritus, Clearistus, Demonax, Democles, Timagoras, and doubtless Cynus. Of course these customs were not confined to Doric cities ; on the contrary, the Symposia and Erani of the Athenians are more celebrated for their wit and humour, while readers of Thucydides remember how large a part the clubs played in the history of the 8th Book. But the custom was systematized, like everything else, with greater rigour among Dorians. It appears that, after having eaten, the cups were filled and libations were made to the Doric patron Phœbus (*cf. Theogn.*, *Frag.* 1) ; then came the Comus or drinking-bout : flute-players entered the room, and some of the guests sang to the lyre, or addressed an elegy to the company at large, or to some particular person. These facts may be gathered from different fragments of Theognis (997, 757) ; but if we wish to gain a complete picture of one of these parties, we may seek it

in an elegy of Xenophanes, which is so fresh and pretty that I feel inclined to paraphrase it at length :—

“Now the floor is cleanly swept ; the hands of all the guests are washed ; the cups shine brightly on the board. Woven wreaths and fragrant myrrh are carried round by the attendants, and in the middle stands a bowl full of that which maketh glad the heart of man. Wine too is ready in reserve, wine inexhaustible, honey-sweet in jars, smelling of flowers. Frankincense breathes forth its perfume among the revellers, and cold water, sweet and pure, waits at their side. Loaves, fresh and golden, stand upon the table, which groans with cheese and rich honey. In the midst is an altar hung about with flowers, and singing and merriment resound throughout the house. First must merry-making men address the gods with holy songs and pure words ; libations must they pour, and pray for strength to act justly ; then may they drink as much as a man can carry home without a guide—unless he be far gone in years. This also is right, to speak of noble deeds and virtue over our cups ; not to tell tales of giants or Titans or the Centaurs, mere fictions of our grandfathers, and foolish fables.”

It was customary at these banquets to sing the praises of youth and to lament old age, ringing endless changes on the refrain “*Vivamus atque amemus*,” which antiquity was never weary of repeating. Very sad and pathetic is the tone of these old songs, wherein the pæan mingles with the dirge ; for youth and the grave are named in the same breath, and while we smell the roses we are reminded that they will wither. Then comes the end—the cold and solitary tomb, eternal frost and everlasting darkness, to which old age, the winter and night of life, is but a melancholy portal. *Gaudeamus igitur, juvenes cum sumus*.

“To pleasure, in life’s bloom, yield we our powers,
While yet to be and to enjoy are ours ;
For swift as thought our glorious youth goes by,
Swift as the coursers that to battle fly,
Bearing the chief with quivering spear in hand,
Madly careering o’er the rich corn-land,”—

so sings Theognis (977), and with even more of pathos he exclaims—

“ Ah me ! my youth ! alas for eld's dark day :
This comes apace, while that fleets fast away.”

The same idea is repeated in many other elegies, always with the same sad cadence : “ No man, as soon as the earth covers him, and he goes down to Erebus, the home of Persephone, takes any pleasure in the sound of the lyre, or the voice of the flute-player, or in the sweet gifts of Dionysus ” (973-976). At another time he reckons up the ills of life : “ When I am drinking I take no heed of soul-consuming poverty or of enemies who speak ill of me ; but I lament delightful youth which is forsaking me, and wail for grim old age who cometh on apace ” (1129-1132). Their tone reminds us of Mimnermus, who said the utmost when he cried—

“ Zeus to Tithonus gave a grievous ill—
Undying age, than death more horrible ! ”

To multiply more elegies of this description would be useless. We may, however, allude to a poem of Simonides (Frag. 100, ed. Gaisford), which combines the sweetness of Mimnermus and the energy of Theognis :—“ Nothing human endures for aye. Well said the bard of Chios, that like the leaves so is the race of men : yet few who hear this keep it in their mind ; for hope is strong within the breast of youth. When the flower of youth lasts, and the heart of a man is light, he nurses idle thoughts, hoping he never will grow old or die ; nor does he think of sickness in good health. Fools are they who dream thus, nor know how short are the days of youth and life. But learn thou this, and live thy life out, cheering thy soul with good things.” The tone of these elegies pervades a great many monuments of Greek sculpture. Standing before the Genius of Eternal Repose, or the so-called Genius of the Vatican, we are moved almost to tears by the dumb sadness with which their perfect beauty has been chastened. Like the shade of young Marcellus in Virgil,

they seem to carry round them a cloud of gloom, impalpable, yet overshadowing their youth with warnings and anticipations of the tomb.

With Theognis the list of gnomic poets, strictly so called, may be said to close. Simonides, from whom I have adduced some passages in illustration of the elder elegiac writers, survived the bard of Megara, and attained a far greater reputation than he enjoyed, at the Syracusan and Athenian courts. How highly his maxims were valued by the moralists of the succeeding age, is known by every reader of the *Protagoras* and *Republic* of Plato. But a more detailed analysis of his verses would be out of place, when we consider that his chief fame rests upon epitaphs, patriotic epigrams, and lyrical fragments—none of them strictly gnomic in their character.

To modern readers the philosophy of the poets whom we have considered will perhaps seem trite, their inspiration tame, their style pedestrian. But their contemporaries were far from arriving at this criticism. To obtain concise and abstract maxims upon the ethics of society, politics, and education, was to them a new and inestimable privilege. In the gnomic poets the morality which had been merely implicit in Homer and Hesiod, received separate treatment and distinct expression. The wisdom which had been gradually collecting for centuries in the Greek mind, was tersely and lucidly condensed into a few pregnant sentences. These sentences formed the data for new syntheses and higher generalizations, the topics for enlarged investigation, the "middle axioms" between the scattered facts of life and the unity of philosophical system. We may regard the gnomic poets with interest, partly on account of the real, if rare, beauty of some of their fragments; partly on account of their historical and illustrative value; partly because all efforts of the human mind in its struggle for emancipation, and all stages in its development, are worthy of attentive study. To the sophists, to the orators, to Socrates

and his friends, to the tragic writers, to educated men at large in Hellas, they were authorities on moral questions ; and their maxims, which the progress of the centuries has rendered commonplace, appeared the sentences of weightiest wisdom, oracles almost, and precepts inspired by more than human prudence.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SATIRISTS.

Invention of the Iambic Metre.—Archilochus.—His Parentage and Life.—His Fame among the Ancients.—Ancient and Modern Modes of Judging Artists.—The Originality of Archilochus as a Poet.—Simonides of Amorgos.—His Satire on Women.—The Ionian Contempt for Women.—Hipponax.—Limping Iambics.—Differences between the Satire of the Greeks and Romans.

THE Greeks displayed their æsthetic instinct in nothing more remarkably than in their exact adaptation of the forms of art to the nature of the subjects which they undertook to treat. The Hexameter had sufficed for the needs of the Epic. The Elegiac had fulfilled the requirements of pathetic or contemplative meditation. But with the development of the national genius a separate vehicle for satire was demanded. Archilochus of Paros created a new style, and presented in the Iambic metre a new instrument to the poets of his race. The circumstances of the birth and parentage of Archilochus are significant. He was the son of Telesicles, a noble Ionian, and of Enipo, a slave-woman. Thus from the very first there were inequalities in his circumstances which may have sufficed to sour his temper. His birth, which may be fixed about 729 B.C., was predicted, according to old tradition, by the oracle at Delphi. The same oracle busied itself at a later period with his death, by cursing the Naxian soldier Calondas, who had killed him in battle, because he had "slain the servant of the Muses." As the fragments we possess of Archilochus render it difficult

to understand the very high estimation in which he was held by the Greeks, and which these stories indicate, it may be well to preface this account of him with some quotations from the ancient critics. Longinus,* to begin with, explains the incongruities of his poetry by saying that he “dragged disorderly elements into his verse under the impulse of divine inspiration.” Plato† calls him ὁ σοφώτατος Ἀρχίλοχος, “the prince of sages,” which, in the mouth of a philosopher, is the highest panegyric. The Alexandrian critic Aristophanes, when asked which of the poems of Archilochus he liked best, answered with laconic brevity, “the longest.” Hadrian,‡ in an epigram, says that the Muses turned the attention of Archilochus to iambics, in order that their darling Homer might not have so dangerous a rival in the field of the Epic. All antiquity agreed in naming him second only to Homer: “Maximus poeta aut certe summo proximus,” “a poet of the highest order, or surely next unto the greatest,” says Valerius Maximus. The birthdays of Homer and Archilochus were celebrated on the same day; their busts were joined in Janus fashion—two faces and one head: Hippodromus the Sophist§ called Homer the Voice, Archilochus the Breath or Soul, of the students of wisdom. The epithet κάλλιστος (most beautiful) was ascribed to him because of his perfect style, though the subjects of his poetry were anything but beautiful. Of this style Quintilian|| says that it excelled in “powerful as well as short and quivering sentences,” that it contained “the greatest possible amount of blood and sinews.” The highest praise which Gorgias could pronounce on Plato when he published his dialogues upon the Sophists, was to say that Athens had produced a new Archilochus. To multiply these panegyrics would be easy. But enough has been adduced to prove that the ancients looked

* *On the Sublime*, xxxiii. 5. † *Rep.* 365, c. ‡ *Anth. Pal.*, vii. 674.

§ *Philostr. Biog. Soph.*, 620.

|| x. l. 60.

on Archilochus as a worthy rival of Homer, as a poet supreme in his own department, as the creator of a new kingdom in poetry, as the sire of a long line of mighty artists.

What remains of the verse of Archilochus and what we know of his life are curiously at variance with this enthusiasm. Nothing proves the difference between ancient and modern views of art more strongly than the fact that all antiquity concurred in regarding as a divinely inspired benefactor of the human race, a man who in the present day would have been hunted from society with execrations. This son of the slave-woman, born in an Ionian island, where license was more tolerated than in a Dorian state, devoted himself to satire, making his genius the instrument of private hate, and turning the golden gifts of the Muses to the service of his selfish spite. A greater contrast cannot be conceived than that which exists between Homer, the priest of Gods and Heroes, the poet of high actions and lofty passions, whose own life is buried in sacred and sublime mystery, and this satirist who saw the world with jaundiced eyes, prying about for subjects of his wrath and bitterness and scorn, whose themes were the passions of his own heart, the sordid misadventures of his personality. It was this contrast between Archilochus and Homer that gave the former a right in the estimation of the Greeks to take equal rank with the Father of the Epos. He, the greatest poet next in date to Homer, by virtue of a divine originality of genius, exercised his art in exactly the opposite field to that which Homer ruled as his demesne. Clearer sign than this of inspiration could not be demanded; and how should posterity withhold its gratitude from the poet who had unlocked a new chamber of the treasure-house of art? This was how the ancients reasoned, instead of measuring their poets, as the moderns try to do, by moral standards and conventional conceptions of propriety.

The facts of the life of Archilochus are briefly these. He

was engaged to be married to Neobulé, daughter of Lycambes. Her father retracted his consent to the marriage, having possibly discovered that the temper of his proposed son-in-law was a mixture of gall, wormwood, vinegar, verjuice, vitriol, and nitric acid. Thereupon, as Horace says :—

“ Archilochum proprio rabies armavit iambo.” *

He made the Iambic metre his own, and sharpened it into a terrible weapon of attack. Each verse he wrote was polished and pointed like an arrow-head. Each line was steeped in the poison of hideous charges against his sweetheart, her sisters, and her father. The set of poems which he produced, and, as it would appear, recited publicly at the festival of Demeter, were so charged with wit and fire, that the country rang with them. The daughters of Lycambes, tradition avers, went straightway and hanged themselves—unable to endure the flight of fiery serpents that had fallen on them : for, to quote the words of Browning, Archilochus had the art of writing verse that “ bit into the live man’s flesh like parchment,” that sent him wandering, branded and for ever shamed, about his native streets and fields. After this murderous exhibition of his power Archilochus left Paros.†

“ Away with Paros ! her figs and fishy life ! ”

He removed to Thasos, where the Parians founded a colony. But Thasos was worse than Paros :‡ “ Like the backbone of an ass it stood bristling with wild wood ; for, in sooth it is not a fair land, or pleasant, or delightful, like that which spreads by Siris’ stream.” It was here he threw his shield away in a battle with the Thracians, and gave Horace and Alcæus a precedent by writing a poem on his want of prowess. The remainder of his life was spent in wandering. He visited Sparta, where,

* It was rage that armed Archilochus with his own Iambic.

† Bergk, *Poetæ Lyrici*, p. 696.

‡ *Ib.* p. 689.

however, he was not suffered to remain an hour. The Ephors judged rightly that this runaway soldier and foul-mouthed Ionian satirist might corrupt the Spartan youth, or sow dissension in the State. The publication of his works was forbidden in this, the most conservative of all Greek States. Finally Archilochus returned to Paros, and was killed in battle by a native of Naxos. A more unhappy existence, wretched in itself and the cause of wretchedness to others, can scarcely be imagined, if the tale of the life of Archilochus be true. Dishonoured by the inequality of his parentage, slighted in the matter of his marriage, discontented at home, restless and rejected abroad, he seems to have been formed by the facts of his biography for the creation of Satire. And this is his greatest title to fame.

It is possible that the Iambic metre existed before the date of Archilochus. An old myth connects it with the festivals of Demeter. Demeter, it is said, could not be made to laugh after her daughter's loss, until a nymph, Iambé, by her jests and sarcasms, raised a smile upon her lips. This legend proves that the Greeks referred the origin of the Iambic to those jokes and gibes which were common in the feasts of Demeter, and from the licentious mirth of which the satiric element of Comedy was developed. The Iambic is nearest in cadence to the language of common life; it is therefore the fit vehicle for dialogue, and for all poetry that deals with common and domestic topics. Again, it is essentially rapid in movement: Horace speaks of *celerēs Iambi* (swift Iambi); Hadrian calls them *λυσσῶντες ἱαμβοὶ* (raging Iambi): this rapidity fitted them for sharp attack and swift satiric pungency. Admitting then that the metre may have been employed in early attempts at colloquial satire, Archilochus, perceiving its capacities, fashioned it to suit the purpose of his own consummate art. He was celebrated among the ancients for having perfected the metres belonging to what they called the *διπλάσιον γένος*,

as distinguished from the ἴσον γένος—that is to say, the Iambic and Trochaic rhythms, in which either the arsis or the thesis has twice the time of the other. In a trochee the first syllable equals two of the same time as the second; in an iamb this order is reversed; whereas the dactyl and the spondee, on which the hexameter and elegiac metres are based, are feet, each member of which has the same time, the two shorts of the dactyl being equivalent to the second long of the spondee. Archilochus, if not absolutely the inventor, was the creator of these two metres, the Iambic and Trochaic, as truly as Homer was the creator of the heroic measure. No proof of the power of his genius can be greater than the fact that, whatever changes may have been subsequently wrought in the Iambic and Trochaic metres, they remained substantially the same as those which Archilochus employed, whether afterwards adapted to Satire, Tragedy, or Comedy. While speaking of Archilochus as a technical artist, it ought to be mentioned that he gave further proof of his originality by elaborating the metrical systems which the Greeks called *Asynartêtes*, or unconnected. These consisted of a mixture of dactylic and anapæstic with trochaic feet. The *Ithyphallic*, which was marked by a succession of three trochees at the end of the line, was the most distinguished.

To translate Archilochus is almost impossible. His merit is the perfection of style, which will admit of no transplantation. His language is the language of common life, exquisitely chosen, and kept within the most exact limits, with a view to the production of a carefully studied effect. It is hopeless to render such fragments as we possess without making them seem coarse or prosy, the poet's supremacy having been achieved by his artistic handling of vernacular Greek. When we compare its pithy terseness with the flowing grandeur of the Epic—a grandeur which had already become conventional in Greece, a fluency which poetasters abused—it

is easy to understand that the racy epigrams of Archilochus, in which the subject was set forth with exquisite point and without circumlocution, must have been an acceptable novelty to his audience. Greek sculpture is not more pure in outline than the following fragment,* which sets before our eyes the figure of a girl embossed on marble or engraved in chalcedony :

ἔχουσα θαλλὸν μυρσίνης ἐτέρπετο
 ῥοδῆς τε καλὸν ἄνθος, ἥ δέ οἱ κόμη
 ὤμους κατεσκίαζε καὶ μετὰφρενα.

Archilochus flourished between 714 and 676 B.C. The date of the next Iambic poet, Simonides of Amorgos, is 660 B.C. It is noticeable that both of these satirists are Ionian. The relaxation of Ionian life and the freedom of Ionian manners, as concerned the artist and the public, rendered the development of satire in Ionia more natural than it could ever have been in a Dorian state. Simonides owes his celebrity to a poem upon women, a very ungallant production of 119 lines, which presents one of the most curious examples upon record of a perfectly smooth and yet crushing satire. The Iambic lines flow quietly and swiftly off the poet's lips, in mild and polished phraseology, with none of the concentrated fury of Archilochus. Yet Simonides aims at no less than destroying the character of a whole sex. In a sort of gentle, well-mannered, lazy way he is successful, not so much by persuading us through examples, after the method of Juvenal, that his satire is justified, as by the imperturbable expression of a profound conviction. The interest of this poem is very great, as marking a departure from the personalities of Archilochus and an attempt to introduce generalities into the region of satiric delineation.

* Bergk, p. 691 :

“ Holding a myrtle-rod she blithely moved,
 And a fair blossoming rose ; the flowing hair
 Shadowed her shoulders, falling to her girdle.”

In this respect it is in Greek literature almost unique, if we except Sicilian, Megarian, and Attic Comedy, whereof this is not the place to speak. The rhetorical treatment of a problem of social ethics from the point of view of satire was, as we shall see hereafter, alien to Greek literature.

This is the plan of the poem. Simonides describes the nature of the different sorts of women by comparing them successively to a hog, a fox, a dog, mud, sea-water, an ass, a weasel, a mare, an ape, a bee. Thus there are ten kinds, and only one respectable or industrious. He rushes at once *in medias res*: "God made the mind of women in the beginning of different qualities: for one he fashioned of a bristly hog; in whose house everything tumbles about in disorder, bespattered with mud, and rolls upon the ground: she, dirty, with unwashed clothes, sits and grows fat in a dung-heap." The woman like mud is thus hit off: "This woman is ignorant of everything both good and bad; her only accomplishment is eating: cold though the winter be, she is too stupid to draw near the fire." Here is the woman who takes after the sea: "She has two minds; when she laughs and is glad, the stranger seeing her at home will give her praise—there is not a better woman than this on the earth, no, nor a fairer; but another day she is unbearable, not to be looked at or approached, but she is right mad. To friend and foe she is alike implacable and odious. Thus as the sea often is calm and innocent, a great delight to sailors in summer-time, and oftentimes again is frantic, tearing along with roaring billows; so is this woman in her temper." The woman who resembles a mare offers other disagreeable qualities. She is "delicate and long-haired, unfit for drudgery or toil: *she* would not touch the mill or lift the sieve or clean the house out! She bathes twice or thrice a day, and smears herself with myrrh; then she wears her hair combed out, long and wavy, decked with flowers. It follows that this woman is a rare sight to one's guests, but to her husband she's a curse,

unless he be a tyrant who prides himself on such expensive luxuries." The ape-like wife is treated even worse. But at last we reach the bee : "The man who gets her is lucky ; to her alone belongs no blame : his property thrives and increases under her ; and loving with a loving helpmate she grows old, the mother of a fair and famous race. Such wives are the best and wisest Zeus grants to men." Yet even after this pretty picture Simonides winds up with a comprehensive condemnation of the female sex : "Zeus made this supreme evil—women : even though they seem to be of good, when one has got one, she becomes a plague."

The spirit of this invective is derived in a great measure from Hesiod, whose myth of Pandora marked his estimate of women, and whose precepts concerning the choice of a wife must have depressed the Boeotian bachelors with the certainty that nine women out of ten would prove a curse. This is precisely the proportion of bad to good that Simonides establishes. His tenth and virtuous wife is praised because she is industrious and quiet, and the mother of many children. We here get the primitive ideal of the help meet for man. Modern theorists would condemn it as the model of a slave. And it is certain that, as Greek civilization advanced, without a corresponding elevation of the conception of wifehood, the chivalrous sentiment of the Greeks sought other channels than that of sexual love, exalting a form of passionate friendship between men as the real source of heroic action and inspiring thought.* The outline traced by Simonides was filled in by

* The degradation of women was undoubtedly the source of many of the worst faults of the Greek race. Yet it is easy to over-estimate the importance of such satires as that of Simonides ; nor would it be fair to take them as expressing the deliberate opinion of the nation. The Jews, who gave a nobler place in social life to women, ascribed the fall of man to Eve. Modern literature again, in spite of Christianity and chivalry, is not wanting in epigrams like the following, ascribed to Leo Battista Alberti : "Levity and inconstancy were given to women as a counter-

subsequent satirists. Susarion, the Comic Poet, makes this grandiloquent proclamation : "Hear, O ye people ! These are the words of Susarion of Tripodiscus, Philinus' son, of Megara : Woman is a curse !" Aristophanes in his plays, the *Lysistrata*, the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, and the *Ecclesiazusæ*, gives to the Athenian women all the attributes of the hog, the ape, the clay, the sea, and the fox ; in the *Clouds* he draws the picture of one who is like the blood-mare ; but he does not hint, even by way of parody, that there existed any bees. The Greeks never learned the art of making women their companions in the noblest sense. It must, however, be borne in mind that the Ionians were less civilized in this respect than the Dorians, who had a higher regard for the excellences of women, and allowed them greater liberty.* Simonides is expressing Ionian rather than Dorian sentiments, and at the same time may be reasonably supposed to be overstraining them for the sake of a burlesque effect.

Next in date to Simonides among the Iambographers ranks Hipponax of Ephesus, who flourished about 540 B.C. He too was an Ionian. The satire which Archilochus had directed against private enemies was extended, as we have seen, by Simonides to a whole sex ; and thus its purely selfish character had been considerably modified. But Hipponax restored it to its primitive function. He used the Iambic as a weapon of personal attack : and as Archilochus had shot his arrows against Lycambes and his daughters, so Hipponax found a butt in Bupalus and Athenis, sculptors of Chios. These two artists had begun by ridiculing the poet, who was short and thin and ugly. They seem to have made caricatures of him, piquing themselves no doubt upon the durability of

balance to their perfidy and badness ; for, could woman stick to her purpose, she would destroy all the fair works of man."

* Plutarch's *Life of Cleomenes* contains two historical pictures of heroic wifehood.

the marble in which they worked. But they found more than their match in Hipponax, whose biting verses are said to have driven Bupalus to hang himself. Whether this is a mere echo of the tale of Lycambes remains doubtful ; but at any rate the statues of the sculptor have perished, while the poet's Iambics exist in sufficient force to justify his reputation among the ancients for having been the most caustic, crabbed, and sour of satirists. They called him *ὁ πικρὸς* (the pungent), and in their epigrams, made merry over his traditional bad temper. Leonidas of Tarentum, for instance, warns travellers not to touch his tomb, lest they should rouse the sleeping wasp ; and Alcæus of Messene says that no ivy, vine, or rose, should adorn his grave, but only thorns and thistles.

In order apparently to bring the metre still more within the sphere of prose and common speech, Hipponax ended his Iambics with a spondee or a trochee instead of an iambus, doing thus the utmost violence to the rhythmical structure. These deformed and mutilated verses were called *χωλιαμβοι* or *ἰαμβοι σκάζοντες* (lame or limping Iambics). They communicate a curious crustiness to the style. The Choliambi are in poetry what the dwarf or cripple is in human nature. Here again, by their acceptance of this halting metre, the Greeks displayed their acute æsthetic sense of propriety, recognising the harmony which subsists between crabbed verses and the distorted subjects with which they dealt—the vices and perversions of humanity—as well as their agreement with the snarling spirit of the satirist. Deformed verse was suited to deformed morality. Meanwhile it is but just to Hipponax to record that he appears to have been a sincere castigator of crime, extravagance, and folly. Without the sublime perfection and fervid energy of Archilochus, he does not seem to have shared the unamiable personal qualities of the greater poet. Two of his lines give a sufficient notion of his style :—

δύ' ἡμέραι γυναικὸς εἰσιν ἡδίσται,
ὅταν γαμῇ τις κακφέρῃ τεθνηκυῖαν.

A woman gives two days of happiness to man, in her bridal and her burial.

The satire which these three Ionians, Archilochus, Simonides, and Hipponax, inaugurated in Greece, was continued by the Attic comic poets. Satire in the Roman and the modern sense of the term never flourished among the Greeks. The life of the Agora, the Ecclesia, and the Theatre, was too complete and free to need the supplement of rhetorical invective intended either for reading or for recitation. Of satirical comments upon individuals and of pasquinades of every kind the Greeks had plenty. We hear, for example, that Alcæus exercised his poetical talent in satirizing Pittacus, and one of the most considerable fragments of Anacreon contains a very ludicrous caricature of Artemon, his rival for the affections of a certain yellow-haired Eurypyle. But their satire did not incline to the form which the earlier writers of Iambics had invented. It found its true sphere in the Dorian Comedy of Epicharmus and the Athenian Comedy of Aristophanes, who combined the personalities of Archilochus and the generalities of Simonides in his own consummate work of dramatic art. Among the lost treasures of Greek literature we have to regret few things more than the plays of the Syracusan Epicharmus, from whom we might have learned directly what now we can only infer—that the Dorians, when uncontrolled by the severe taste of Sparta, indulged a humour for drollery and sarcasm, which, though rougher than that of the Ionians, must have had its own flavour of raciness and fun. Roman satire maintained a strictly moral intention ; *facit indignatio versus* is the motto of Juvenal, while Horace holds the mirror of worldly philosophy to the follies and the vices of his age, and Persius applies the canons of Stoical Ethics to the phenomena of society as he observed them. This is the lead which our modern satirists—the Regnier

of France, the Dryden or the Pope of England, have followed. Greek literature furnishes no specimen of this species of composition. Wherever in the Comedies of Aristophanes, or the Dialogues of Lucian, or the Epigrams of the Anthology, we meet with satire, we find the simple motives of Archilochus and Simonides at work. Personal animosity gives a barb and a venom to the shaft : or the poet delineates with more or less of comic wit the social anomalies that have struck his fancy. Of serious invective and of moral preaching, the Greeks, in their satiric art at least, knew nothing. Plato himself is only accidentally a satirist in the sense of the term which we moderns have adopted from the Romans.

CHAPTER V.

THE LYRIC POETS.

The Æsthetic Instinct of the Greeks in their Choice of Metres.—Different Species of Lyrical Poetry.—The Fragments in Bergk's Collection.—Proemia.—Prosodia.—Parthenia.—Pæan.—Hyporchem.—Dithyramb.—Phallic Hymn.—Epinikia.—Threnoi.—Scolia.—Æolian and Dorian Lyrists.—The Flourishing Period of Lesbos.—Sappho.—Alcæus.—Anacreon.—Nationality of the Dorian Lyrists.—Spartan Education.—Alcman.—Arion.—Stesichorus.—Ibycus.—Simonides.—Greek Troubadours.—Style of Simonides.—Pindar.

To compress into a single essay all that should be said about the Greek lyrical poets is impossible. Yet by eliminating the writers of elegies and iambics, who have been considered separately as gnomic poets and satirists, the field is somewhat narrowed. Simonides of Amorgos, Archilochus, Theognis, Solon, not to mention lesser names, are by this process legitimately excluded. The Æolian lyrists, with Sappho at their head, and the so-called Dorian lyrists, who culminate in Pindar, remain. Casting a glance backwards into the remote shadows of antiquity, we find that lyrical poetry, like all art in Greece, took its origin in connection with primitive Nature-worship. The song of Linus,* referred to by Homer in his

* τοῖσιν δ' ἐν μέσσοισι πᾶς φόρμιγγι λυγείῃ
 ἱμερόεν κιθάριζε· λίνον δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ᾄδειεν
 λεπταλήν φωνῇ.—*Iliad*, xviii. 569.

“A boy, amid them, from a clear-toned harp
 Drew lovely music ; well his liquid voice
 The strings accompanied.”—*Lord Derby's Trans.*

description of the shield of Achilles, was a lament sung by reapers for the beautiful dead youth who symbolised the decay of summer's prime.* In the funeral chant for Adonis, women bewailed the fleeting splendour of the spring; and Hyacinthus, loved and slain by Phœbus, whom the Laconian youths and maidens honoured, was again a type of vernal loveliness deflowered. The Bacchic songs of alternating mirth and sadness, which gave birth, through the Dithyramb, to Tragedy, and through the Comus-hymn to Comedy, marked the waxing and the waning of successive years, the pulses of the heart of Nature, to which men listened as the months passed over them. In their dim beginnings these elements of Greek poetry are hardly to be distinguished from the dirges and the raptures of Asiatic ceremonial, in which the dance and chant and song were mingled in a vague monotony—generation after generation expressing the same emotions according to traditions handed down from their forefathers. But the Greek genius was endowed with the faculty of distinguishing, differentiating, vitalizing, what the Oriental nations left hazy and confused and inert. Therefore with the very earliest stirrings of conscious art in Greece we remark a powerful specializing tendency. Articulation succeeds to mere interjectional utterance. Separate forms of music and of metre are devoted, with the unerring instinct of a truly æsthetic race, to the expression of the several moods and passions of the soul. An unconscious psychology leads by intuitive analysis to the

* Bergk (*Poeta Lyrici Græci*, 3 vols., Leipsic, 1866) gives an old Greek Linus-song on p. 1297 :—

“ O Linus, thee the gods did grace :
 For unto thee they gave, most dear,
 First among men the song to raise
 With shrill voice sounding high and clear ;
 And Phœbus thee in anger slays,
 And Muses mourn around thy bier.”

creation of distinct branches of composition, each accurately adapted to its special purpose.

From the very first commencement of their literature, the Greeks thus determined separate styles and established critical canons, which, though empirically and spontaneously formed, were based on real relations between the moral and æsthetical sides of art, between feeling and expression, substance and form. The Hexameter was consecrated to epical narrative ; the Elegy was confined to songs of lament or meditation ; the Iambic assumed a satiric character. To have written a narrative in Iambics or a satire in Hexameters would have been odious to Greek taste : the stately march of the Dactylic metre seemed unfit for snarling and invective ; the quick flight of the Iambic did not carry weight enough or volume to sustain a lengthy narrative. In the same way the infinite divisions of lyrical poetry had all their own peculiar proprieties. How could a poet have bewailed his loves or losses in the stately structure of the Pindaric ode ? Conversely, a hymn to Phœbus required more sonorousness and elaboration than the recurring stanzas of the Sapphic or Alcaic offered. It was the business, therefore, of the Greek poet, after duly considering his subject, to select the special form of poetry consecrated by long usage for his particular purpose, to conform his language to some species of music inseparable from that style, and then, within the prescribed limits both of metre and of melody, to exercise his imagination as freely as he could, and to produce novelty. This amount of fixity in the forms of poetry and music arose from the exquisite tact and innate taste of the Greek race. It was far from being a piece of scholastic pedantry or of Chinese conservatism. No ; the diction, metre, and music of an elegy or an ode tended to assume a certain form as naturally as the ingredients of a ruby or a sapphire crystallize into a crimson or an azure stone. The discrimination shown by the Greeks in all the technicalities of art remained in full vigour till the

decline of their literature. It was not until the Alexandrian age that they began to confound these delicate distinctions, and to use the Idyllic Hexameter for all subjects, whether narrative, descriptive, elegiac, encomiastic, hymeneal.* Then, and not till then, the Greeks descended to that degradation of art which prevailed, for instance, in England during what we call the classic period of our literature. Under the influence of Dryden and of Pope, an English poet used no metre but the heroic couplet, whether he were writing a play, an epigram, a satire, an epic, an eclogue, an elegy, or a didactic epistle; thus losing all elasticity of style, all the force which appropriate form communicates to thought.

To catalogue the minute subdivisions of the art of lyric poetry in Greece, to show how wisely their several limits were prescribed, how firmly adhered to, and to trace the connexion of choral song with all the affairs of public and private life, would be a task of some magnitude. Colonel Mure, in a well-known passage, writes:—"From Olympus down to the workshop or the sheep-fold, from Jove and Apollo to the wandering mendicant, every rank and degree of the Greek community, divine or human, had its own proper allotment of poetical celebration. The gods had their hymns, nomes, pæans, dithyrambs; great men had their encomia and epinikia; the votaries of pleasure their erotica and symposiaca; the mourner his threnodia and elegies; the vine-dresser had his epilenia; the herdsmen their bucolica; even the beggar his eiresione and chelidonisma." Lyrical poetry in Greece was not produced, like poetry in modern times, for the student, by men who find they have a taste for versifying. It was intimately intertwined with actual

* Many poems of the Syracusan Idyllists are valuable historically as adaptations of the Hexameter to subjects essentially lyrical. In the *Adoniazusæ*, the *Epithalamium Helenæ*, the *Lament for Bion*, &c., we trace a lyrical inspiration overlaid by the Idyllic form. Theocritus must have worked on the lines of old choral poetry.

life, and was so indispensable that every town had its professional poets and choruses, just as every church in Europe now has its organist, of greater or less pretension. The mass of lyrical poetry which must have existed in Greece was probably enormous. We can only compare it to the quantity of church music that exists in Germany and Italy, in MS. and print, good, bad, and indifferent, unknown and unexplored, so voluminous that no one ventures to sift it or reduce it to order. Of this large mass we possess the fragments. Just as the rocky islands of the *Ægean Archipelago* testify to the existence of a submerged tract of mountain heights and valleys, whose summits alone appear above the waves, so the odes of Pindar, the waifs and strays of Sappho, Simonides, and others, are evidences of the loss we have sustained. They prove that beneath the ocean of time and oblivion remain for ever buried stores of poetry, which might have been sufficient to form the glory of a literature less rich in masterpieces than the Greek. To collect the fragments, to piece them together, to ponder over them until their scattered indications offer some suggestion of the whole which has been lost, is all that remains for the modern student. Like the mutilated marbles of Praxiteles, chips broken off from bas-reliefs and statues, which are disinterred from the ruins of Rome or Herculaneum, the minutest portions of the Greek lyrists have their value. We must be thankful for any two words of Sappho that survive in authentic juxtaposition, for any hemistich that may be veritably styled a relic of "some tender-hearted scroll of pure Simonides."

Chance has wrought fantastically with these relics. The lyrists, even in classical days, fell comparatively early into neglect. They were too condensed in language, too difficult in style, too sublime in imagination for the pedants of the later Empire. Long before its close, Greek literature was oppressed with its own wealth; in the words of Livy, *magnitudine laboravit suâ*. Taste, too, began to change; sophistic treatises,

idyllic verses, novelettes in prose, neat epigrams, usurped upon the grander forms of composition. The stagnation, again, of civic life under imperial sway proved unfavourable to the composition of national odes and to choric celebrations in which whole peoples took a part. So disdainful in her almsgiving has Fortune been, that she has only flung to us the Epinikian odes of Pindar ; while his hymns to the gods, his processional chants, and his funeral dirges, are lost. Young Athens, Alexandria, and Byzantium cared, we may conceive, for poems which shed lustre on athletic sports and horse-racing. Trainers, boxers, riders, chariot-drivers—all the muscular section of the public—had some interest in bygone Pythian or Olympian victories. But who sought to preserve the antiquated hymns to Phœbus and to Zeus, when the rites of Isis and Serapis and the Phrygian mother were in vogue ? The outspoken boldness of the Erotic and Satiric lyrist stood them in bad stead. When Theodora was exhibiting her naked charms in the arena, who could commend the study of Anacreon in the schoolroom ? Degeneracy of public morals and prudery of literary taste go not unfrequently together. Therefore, the emperor Julian proscribed Archilochus ; and what Julian proscribed, the Christians sought to extirpate. To destroy an ode of Sappho was a good work. Consequently, we possess no complete edition of even a section of the works of any lyrist except Pindar : what remains of the others has been preserved in the works of critics, anecdote-mongers, and grammarians ; who cite tantalizing passages to prove a rule in syntax, to illustrate a legend or a custom, to exemplify a canon of taste. Imbedded in ponderous prose, these splintered jewels escaped the iconoclastic zeal of the monks. Thanks be to Athenæus above all men (the author of an imaginary dialogue in fifteen bulky books on every topic of Greek antiquity), to Longinus, to Philostratus, to Maximus Tyrius, to Plutarch the moralist, to Stobæus, to Hephæstion, to Herodian, and to the host of

other Dryasdusts from whose heaps of shot rubbish Bergk and his predecessors have sorted out the fragments of extinguished stars! As a masterpiece of patient, self-denying, scientific, exhaustive investigation, the three volumes of Bergk are unrivalled. Every author of antiquity has been laid under contribution, subjected to critical analysis, compared and confronted with his fellow-witnesses. The result, reduced to the smallest possible compass, yields a small glittering heap of pure gold-dust, a little handful of auriferous deposit sifted from numberless river-beds, crushed from huge masses of unfertile quartz. In our admiration of the scholar's ingenuity, we almost forget our sorrow for so much irreparable waste.

Before proceeding to consider the justice of the time-honoured division of Greek Lyrics into *Æolian* and *Dorian*, it will be well to pass in review a few of the principal classes into which Greek choral poetry may be divided. Only thus can any idea of its richness and variety be formed. The old Homeric *ὑμνοι*, or hymns dedicated to special deities, were intended to be sung at festivals and rhapsodical contests. Their technical name was *Proëmia*, or preludes—preludes, that is, to a longer recitation; and on this account, as they were chanted by the poet himself, they were written in hexameters. With them, therefore, we have nothing here to do. Processional hymns, or *Prosodia*, on the contrary, were strictly lyrical, and constituted a large portion of the poetry of Pindar, Alcman, and Stesichorus. They were sung at solemn festivals by troops of men and maidens walking, crowned with olive, myrtle, bay, or oleander, to the shrines. Their style varied with the occasion and the character of the deity to whom they were addressed. When Hecuba led her maidens in dire necessity to the shrine of Pallas, the *Prosodion* was solemn and earnest. When Sophocles, with lyre in hand, headed the chorus round the trophy of Salamis, it was victorious and martial. If we wish to present to our mind a picture of these processional cere-

monies, we may study the frieze of the Parthenon preserved among the Elgin Marbles. Those long lines of maidens and young men, with baskets in their hands, with flowers and palm-branches, with censers and sacred emblems, are marching to the sound of flutes and lyres, and to the stately rhythms of antiphonal chanting. When they reach the altar of the god, a halt is made; the libations are poured; and now the music changes to a solemn and spondaic measure—for the term spondaic seems to be derived from the fact that the libation-hymn was composed in a grave and heavy metre of full feet. Hephæstion has preserved a spondaic verse of Terpander which illustrates this rhythm :—

σπένδωμεν ταῖς Μνάμας
 παισιν Μώσαις
 καὶ τῷ Μωσάρχῳ
 Λατοῦς νιέϊ.*

In the age of Greek decadence the honours of the Prosodion were sometimes paid to men. Athenæus gives this lively description of the procession which greeted Demetrius Poliorketes: “When Demetrius returned from Leucadia and Corcyra to Athens, the Athenians received him not only with incense and garlands and libations, but they even sent out processional choruses, and greeted him with Ithyphallic hymns and dances: stationed by his chariot-wheels, they sang and danced and chanted that he alone was a real god; the rest were sleeping, or were on a journey, or did not exist; they called him son of Poseidon and Aphrodite, eminent for beauty, universal in his goodness to mankind; then they prayed and besought and supplicated him like a god.” The hymn which they sang may be read in Bergk, vol. iii. p. 1314. It is one of the most interesting relics of antiquity.†

* “Pour we libations to Memory’s daughters, the Muses, and to the Muse-leading son of Leto.”

† Plutarch records with just indignation the honours of this sort paid

For the sake of its rare and curious metre alternating the Iambic and Trochaic rhythms, I have faced the difficulties of translation, and have ventured on the following version :—

“See how the mightiest gods, and best-beloved
 Towards our town are winging !
 For lo, Demeter and Demetrius
 This glad day is bringing !
 She to perform her Daughter’s solemn rites ;
 Mystic pomps attend her :
 He, joyous as a god should be, and blithe,
 Comes with laughing splendour.
 Show forth your triumph ! Friends all, troop around !
 Let him shine above you !
 Be you the stars to circle him with love ;
 He’s the sun to love you.
 Hail, offspring of Poseidon, powerful god,
 Child of Aphrodite !
 The other gods keep far away from earth ;
 Have no ears, though mighty ;
 They are not, or they will not hear us wail :
 Thee our eye beholdeth ;
 Not wood, not stone, but living, breathing, real,
 Thee our prayer enfoldeth.
 First give us peace ! Give, dearest, for thou canst ;
 Thou art Lord and Master !
 The Sphinx, who not on Thebes, but on all Greece
 Swoops to gloat and pasture ;
 The Ætolian, he who sits upon his rock,
 Like that old disaster ;
 He feeds upon our flesh and blood, and we
 Can no longer labour ;
 For it was ever thus the Ætolian thief
 Preyed upon his neighbour ;
 Him punish Thou, or if not Thou, then send
 Œdipus to harm him,
 Who’ll cast this Sphinx down from his cliff of pride,
 Or to stone will charm him.”

by Aratus to Antigonus : “He offered sacrifices, called Antigonea, in honour of Antigonus, and sang pæans himself, with a garland on his head, to the praise of *a wasted, consumptive Macedonian*.” (*Life of Cleomenes*.) The words in italics strongly express a true Greek sense of disgust for the barbarian and the weakling.

A special kind of prosodia were the Parthenia, or processional hymns of maidens ; such, for example, as the Athenian girls sang to Pallas while they climbed the staircase of the Parthenon. Aristophanes has presented us with a beautiful example of antiphonal Parthenia at the end of his *Lysistrata*, where choruses of Athenian and Spartan girls sing turn and turn about in rivalry. Alcman won his laurels at Sparta by the composition of this kind of hymn. A fragment (Bergk, p. 842) only remains to show what they were like : "No more, ye honey-voiced, sweet-singing maidens, can my limbs support me : oh, oh, that I were a cerylus, who skims the flower of the sea with halcyons, of a dauntless heart, the sea-blue bird of spring !" Such Parthenia, when addressed to Phœbus, were called Daphnephorica ; for the maidens carried laurel-branches to his shrine. A more charming picture cannot be conceived than that which is presented to our fancy by these white-robed virgins, each with her rod of bay and crown of laurel-leaves, ascending the marble steps of the temple of the Dorian god. John Lyly, who had imbibed the spirit of Greek life, has written a hymn, "Sing to Apollo, god of day !" which might well have been used at such a festival.

The Prosodia of which we have been speaking were addressed to all the gods. But there were other choric hymns with special names, consecrated to the service of particular deities. Of this sort was the Pæan, sung to Phœbus in his double character of a victorious and a healing god. The Pæan was both a song of war and of peace ; it was the proper accompaniment of the battle and the feast. In like manner the Hyporchem, which, as its name implies, was always accompanied by a dance, originally formed a portion of the cult of Phœbus. The chorus described in the *Iliad*, xviii. 590, and the glorious pageant of Olympus celebrated in the Hymn to Apollo, 186, were, technically speaking, Hyporchems. As the Pæan and the Hyporchem were originally consecrated to

Apollo, so the Dithyramb and the Phallic hymn belonged to Dionysus. The Dithyramb never lost the tempestuous and enthusiastic character of Bacchic revelry ; but in time it grew from being a wild celebration of the mystic sufferings of Bacchus into the sublime art of Tragedy. Arion forms the point of this transition. He seems to have thrown a greater reality of passion and dramatic action into his choruses, which led to the introduction of dialogue, and so by degrees to Tragedy proper. Meanwhile the Dithyramb, as a tumultuous choric song, retained its individual existence. As Arion had devoted his genius to the cultivation of the Tragic or Cyclic chorus, Lasos, the master of Pindar, stamped his own style upon the Dithyrambic ode as it continued to be used at festive meetings. Every town in Greece had its chorodidascalus, a functionary whom Aristophanes ridicules in the person of Kinesias in the *Birds*.* He is introduced warbling the wildest, windiest nonsense, and entreating to have a pair of wings given him that he may chase his airy ideas through the sky. The Phallic Hymn, from which in like manner Comedy took its origin, was a mad outpouring of purely animal exultation. Here the wine-god was celebrated as the pleasure-loving, drunken, lascivious deity. Aristophanes, again, our truest source of information respecting all the details of Greek life, supplies us with an instance of one of these songs, and of the simple rites which accompanied its performance.† In the *Frogs*, also, the Master of Comedy has presented us with an elaborate series of Bacchic hymns.‡ Here the Phallic and Satyric element is combined with something of the grandeur of the Dithyrambic Ode ; the curious mixture of sarcasm, obscenity, and splendid poetry offers a striking instance of Greek religious feeling, so incomprehensible to modern minds.

* See Frere, vol. ii. pp. 200, 201.

† See Tr. of *Acharnians*, Frere, vol. ii. p. 17.

‡ Frere's *Translation*, vol. ii. pp. 241-245.

It is greatly to be regretted that our information respecting the Dithyramb and the Phallic Chorus has to be obtained from a dramatic poet rather than from any perfect specimens of these compositions. Bergk's Collection, full as it is, yields nothing but hints and fragments.*

Passing to the Lyrics, which were connected with circumstances of human life, the first to be mentioned are Epinikia, or odes sung in honour of victors at the games. Of these, in the splendid series of Pindar and in the fragments of Simonides, we have abundant examples. We are also able to trace their development from the simple exclamation of *τῆ' ἑλλάς ὦ καλλίνικε*,† the composition of which was ascribed to Archilochus, and which Pindar looked back upon with scornful triumph. Indeed, in his hands, to use the phrase of Wordsworth, "the thing became a trumpet, whence he blew soul-animating strains." The Epinikian Ode was the most costly and splendid flower in the victor's wreath. Pindar compares the praise which he pours forth for Diagoras the Rhodian to noblest wine foaming in the golden goblet, which a father gives to honour his son-in-law, the prime and jewel of his treasure-house. The occasions on which such odes were sung were various—either when the victor was being crowned, or when he was returning to his native city, or by torchlight during the evening of the victorious day, or at a banquet after his reception in his home. On one of these occasions the poet would appear with his trained band of singers and musicians, and, taking his stand by the altar of the god to whom the victor offered a thanksgiving sacrifice, would guide the choric stream of song through strophe and antistrophe and epode, in sonorous labyrinths of eulogy and mythological allusion—prayer, praise, and admonition mingling with the

* See however the interesting archaic hymns to Dionysus, pp. 1299, 1300.

† Bergk, p. 716; Pindar, *Olymp.* ix. 1.

fumes of intoxicating poetry. Of all these occasions the most striking must have been the commemoration of a victory in the temple of Zeus at Altis, near Olympia, by moonlight. The contest has taken place during the day; and the olive wreath has been placed upon the head, say of Myronides, from Thebes. Having rested from his labours, after the bath and the banquet, crowned with his victorious garland and with fillets bound about his hair, he stands surrounded by his friends. Zeus, in ivory and gold, looks down from his marble pedestal. Through the open roof shines a moon of the south, glancing aslant on statue and column and carved bas-relief; while below, the red glare of torches, paling its silver, flickers with fitful crimson on the glowing faces of young men. Then swells the choral hymn, with praise of Myronides and praise of Thebes, and stormy flights of fancy shooting beyond sun and stars. At its close follow libation, dedication, hands upraised in prayer to Zeus. Then the trampling of sandalled feet upon the marble floor, the procession with songs still sounding to the temple-gate, and on a sudden, lo! the full moon, the hills, and plain, and solemn night of stars. The band disperses, and the Comus succeeds to the thanksgiving.

As a contrast to the *Epinikia* we may take the different kinds of *Threnoi*, or funeral songs. The most primitive was called *Epikedeion*, a dirge or coronach, improvised by women over the bodies of the dead.* The lamentations of Helen and Andromache for Hector, and of the slave-girls for Patroclus, are Homeric instances of this species. Euripides imitates them in his tragedies—in the dirge sung by Antigone, for instance in the *Phænissæ*, and in the wailings of Hecuba

* It is interesting to observe that this custom of the funeral dirge, improvised with wild inspiration by women, has been preserved almost to the present day in Corsica. A collection of these coronachs, called *Voceri* in the language of the island, was published in 1855 at Bastia, by Cesare Fabiani.

for Astyanax in the *Troades*. A different kind of Threnos were the songs of Linus, Hyacinth, Adonis, and others, to which I have already alluded in the beginning of this chapter. The finest extant specimen of this sort is Bion's Lament for Adonis, which, however, was composed in the Idyllic age, when the hexameter had been substituted for the richer and more splendid lyric metres. A third class of Threnos consisted of complex choral hymns composed by poets like Simonides or Pindar, to be sung at funeral solemnities. Many of our most precious lyric fragments, those which embody philosophical reflections on life and dim previsions of another world, belong to dirges of this elaborate kind.

Marriage festivals offered another occasion for lyric poetry. The Hymeneal, sung during the wedding ceremony, the Epithalamium, chanted at the house of the bridegroom, and many other species, have been defined by the grammarians. Unfortunately we possess nothing but the merest *débris* of any true Greek ode of this kind. Sappho's are the best. We have to study the imitations of her style in Catullus, the marriage chorus at the end of the *Birds* of Aristophanes, and the Epithalamium of Helen by Theocritus, in order to form a remote conception of what a Sapphic marriage chorus might have been. In banquet songs we are more fortunate. Abundant are the Parœnia of Alcæus, Anacreon, Theognis, and others. Scolia or catches, so called from their irregular metrical structure, were also in vogue at banquets; and of these popular songs a sufficient number are preserved. A drunken passage in the works of Aristophanes brings before us after a lively fashion the ceremonies with which the Scolion and the wine-cup circled the symposium together.* Of all these catches the most celebrated in ancient days was the panegyric of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, attributed to Calli-

* Translated by Mitchell, vol. ii. p. 282, in his *Dicast turned Gentleman*.

stratus. As I have the opportunity of printing from MS. a translation of this song by the late Professor Conington, I will introduce it here :—

“In a wreath of myrtle I'll wear my glaive,
Like Harmodius and Aristogeiton brave,
Who, striking the tyrant down,
Made Athens a freeman's town.

“Harmodius, our darling, thou art not dead !
Thou liv'st in the isles of the blest, 'tis said,
With Achilles first in speed,
And Tydides Diomedē.

“In a wreath of myrtle I'll wear my glaive,
Like Harmodius and Aristogeiton brave,
When the twain on Athena's day
Did the tyrant Hipparchus slay.

“For aye shall your fame in the land be told,
Harmodius and Aristogeiton bold,
Who, striking the tyrant down,
Made Athens a freeman's town.”

The whole collection of *Scolia* in Bergk (pp. 1287–1296) is full of interest, since these simple and popular songs carry us back more freshly than elaborate poems to the life of the Greeks. One of these, attributed to Simonides, sums up the qualities which a Greek most desired :—

*ἐγχαίνειν μὲν ἄριστον ἀνδρὶ θνατῷ,
δεύτερον δὲ φῦλιν καλὸν γενέσθαι,
τὸ τρίτον δὲ πλουτεῖν ἀδόλως,
καὶ τὸ τέταρτον ἡβᾶν μετὰ τῶν φίλων.**

Unlike Solomon, when asked what he would take from the Lord as a gift, the Greek poet does not answer Wisdom, but first Health, secondly Beauty, thirdly Wealth untainted by fraud, and fourthly Youth in the society of friends. The last

* “To be in health is the best thing for mortal man ; the next best to be of form and nature beautiful ; the third, to enjoy wealth gotten without fraud ; and the fourth, to be in youth's bloom among friends.”

thought of this little poem is expanded very beautifully in another Scolion :—

σύν μοι πῖνε, συνήβα, συνέρα, συστεφανηφόρει,
σύν μοι μαινομένῳ μάλιστ', σὺν σῶφρονι σωφρόνει :

“Drink with me, be young with me, love with me, wear crowns with me, when I am mad be mad with me, be wise with me when I am wise.” The verb *συνηβᾶν* is almost untranslatable. Of another kind is the Scolion of Hybrias the Cretan, translated thus into English verse by Thomas Campbell :—

“My wealth's a burly spear and brand,
And a right good shield of hides untanned,
Which on my arm I buckle :
With these I plough, I reap, I sow,
With these I make the sweet vintage flow,
And all around me truckle.

“But your wights that take no pride to wield
A massy spear and well-made shield,
Nor joy to draw the sword :
Oh, I bring those heartless, hapless drones,
Down in a trice on their marrow bones,
To call me king and lord.”

This catch brings before our eyes in a very lively picture the lawless Freiherr of early Dorian barbarism. Another species of the Scolion is more sentimental : “Would that I were a fair lyre of ivory, and that fair boys bore me to the Bacchic Choir ; would that I were a fair, new, and mighty golden jar, and that a fair woman bore me with a pure heart.” Again we find moral precepts in these catches. “Whoso betrayeth not a friend hath great honour among men and gods, according to my mind.”

While on the subject of Scolia, it will not do to pass over the most splendid specimen we have in this order of composition. It is a fragment from Pindar (Bergk, p. 327), to translate which, I feel, is profanation :

“O soul, ’tis thine in season meet,
 To pluck of love the blossom sweet,
 When hearts are young :
 But he who sees the blazing beams,
 The light that from *that* forehead streams,
 And is not stung ;—
 Who is not storm-tost with desire,—
 Lo ! he, I ween, with frozen fire,
 Of adamant or stubborn steel,
 Is forged in his cold heart that cannot feel.

“Disowned, dishonoured, and denied
 By Aphrodite glittering-eyed,
 He either toils
 All day for gold, a sordid gain,
 Or bent beneath a woman’s reign,
 In petty broils,
 Endures her insolence, a drudge,
 Compelled the common path to trudge ;
 But I, apart from this disease,
 Wasting away like wax of holy bees,

“Which the sun’s splendour wounds, do pine,
 Whene’er I see the young-limbed bloom divine
 Of boys. Lo ! look you well ; for here in Tenedos,
 Grace and Persuasion dwell in young Theoxenos.”

Of the many different kinds of lyric poetry consecrated to love and intended for recitation by single musicians, it is not possible to give a strict account. That the Greeks cultivated the serenade is clear from a passage in the *Ecclesiazusæ* of Aristophanes, which contains a graceful though gross specimen of this kind of song. The children’s songs (Bergk, 1303–1307) about flowers, tortoises, and hobgoblins are too curiously illustrative of Greek manners not to merit a passing notice, nor can I here omit a translation of the only Swallow-song preserved to us. Athenæus, to whom we owe this curious relique, localizes the Chelidonisma in Rhodes, referring it particularly to the district of Lindus.* In spring-time the children went

* Athen. *Lib.* viii. 360.

round the town, collecting doles and presents from house to house, and singing as they went :

“ She is here, she is here, the swallow !
 Fair seasons bringing, fair years to follow !
 Her belly is white,
 Her back black as night !
 From your rich house
 Roll forth to us
 Tarts, wine, and cheese :
 Or if not these,
 Oatmeal and barley-cake
 The swallow deigns to take.
 What shall we have ? or must we hence away ?
 Thanks, if you give ; if not, we'll make you pay !
 The house door hence we'll carry ;
 Nor shall the lintel tarry ;
 From hearth and home your wife we'll rob ;
 She is so small,
 To take her off will be an easy job !
 Whate'er you give, give largess free !
 Up ! open, open to the swallow's call !
 No grave old men, but merry children we ! ”

After this lengthy, but far from exhaustive enumeration of the kinds and occasions of lyrical poetry in Greece, we may turn to consider the different parts played in their cultivation by the several chief families of Hellas. It is remarkable that all the great writers of elegies and iambics were Ionians ; Theognis of Megara is the only Dorian whose genuine poems are celebrated ; and against his we have to set the bulk of Solon, Mimnermus, Phocylides, Callinus, and Tyrtæus, all Ionians.* Not a single Dorian poet seems to have composed iambics, the rigid discipline and strong sense of decorum in a Dorian state probably rendering the cultivation of satire impossible. We are told that the Spartans would not even suffer Archilochus to lodge as a stranger among them. But when we turn to lyric poetry—to the poetry of stanzas and strophes—

* This begs the question of the nationality of Tyrtæus, who, according to antique tradition, was of Attic origin, but who writes like a Spartan.

the two other families of the Greeks, the Æolians and the Dorians, take the lead. As a Dorian was exceptional among the elegists, so now an Ionian will be comparatively rare among the lyrists. So great was the æsthetical conservatism of the Greeks that throughout their history their primitive distinctions of dialect are never lost sight of. When the Athenians developed Tragedy, they wrote their iambics in pure Attic, but they preserved a Dorian tone in their choruses. The epic hexameter and the elegy, on the other hand, retained an Ionian character to the last.

The paths struck out by the Æolians and Dorians in the domain of lyric poetry were so different as to justify us in speaking of two distinct species. When Milton, in the *Paradise Regained*, catalogued the poetical achievements of the Greeks, he assigned their true place to these two species in the line—

“ Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes.”

The poets and poetesses of the Ægean Islands cultivated a rapid and effusive style, polishing their passionate stanzas so exquisitely that they well deserve the name of charms. The Dorian poets, inspired by a graver and more sustained imagination, composed long and complex odes for the celebration of gods and heroes. The Æolian singer dwelt on his own joys and sorrows; the Dorian bard addressed some deity, or told the tales of demigods and warriors. The Æolian chanted his stanzas to the lyre or flute; the Dorian trained a chorus, who gave utterance to his verse in dance and song.

Though the Æolians were the eldest family of the Hellenic stock, their language retaining more than any other dialect the primitive character of the Greek tongue, yet they never rose to such historical importance as the Dorians and Ionians. Geographically they were scattered in such a way as to have no definite centre. We find Æolians in Elis, in Bœotia, in Lesbos, and on the Asian seacoast south of the Troad. But in

course of time the *Æolians* of Elis and *Bœotia* were almost identified with the Dorians as allies of Sparta, while the *Æolians* of Lesbos and Asia merged themselves in the Athenian empire. Politically, mentally, and morally, they showed less activity than their cousins of the blood of Dorus and Ion. They produced no lawgivers like Lycurgus and Solon : they had no metropolis like Sparta and Athens ; they played no prominent part in the struggle with Persia, or in the Peloponnesian war. In the later days of Greece, Thebes, when Dorized by contact with the Spartans, for a short time headed Greece, and flourished with brief splendour. But it would not be accurate to give to the *Æolian* character the credit of the fame of Thebes at that advanced period. Yet, for a certain space of time, the *Æolians* occupied the very foreground of Greek literature, and blazed out with a brilliance of lyrical splendour that has never been surpassed. There seems to have been something passionate and intense in their temperament, which made the emotions of the Dorian and the Ionian feeble by comparison. Lesbos, the centre of *Æolian* culture, was the island of overmastering passions : the personality of the Greek race burned there with a fierce and steady flame of concentrated feeling. The energies which the Ionians divided between pleasure, politics, trade, legislation, science, and the arts, and which the Dorians turned to war and statecraft and social economy, were restrained by the *Æolians* within the sphere of individual emotions, ready to burst forth volcanically. Nowhere in any age of Greek history, or in any part of Hellas, did the love of physical beauty, the sensibility to radiant scenes of nature, the consuming fervour of personal feeling, assume such grand proportions and receive so illustrious an expression as they did in Lesbos. At first this passion blossomed into the most exquisite lyrical poetry that the world has known : this was the flower-time of the *Æolians*, their brief and brilliant spring. But the fruit it bore was bitter and rotten. Lesbos became a byword for corrup-

tion. The passions which for a moment had flamed into the gorgeousness of Art, burning their envelope of words and images, remained a mere furnace of sensuality, from which no expression of the divine in human life could be expected. In this the Lesbian poets were not unlike the Provençal troubadours, who made a literature of Love, or the Venetian painters, who based their art upon the beauty of colour, the voluptuous charms of the flesh. In each case the motive of enthusiastic passion sufficed to produce a dazzling result. But as soon as its freshness was exhausted there was nothing left for Art to live on, and mere decadence to sensuality ensued.

Several circumstances contributed to aid the development of lyric poetry in Lesbos. The customs of the Æolians permitted more social and domestic freedom than was common in Greece. Æolian women were not confined to the harem like Ionians, or subjected to the rigorous discipline of the Spartans. While mixing freely with male society, they were highly educated, and accustomed to express their sentiments to an extent unknown elsewhere in history—until, indeed, the present time. The Lesbian ladies applied themselves successfully to literature. They formed clubs for the cultivation of poetry and music. They studied the arts of beauty, and sought to refine metrical forms and diction. Nor did they confine themselves to the scientific side of art. Unrestrained by public opinion, and passionate for the beautiful, they cultivated their senses and emotions, and indulged their wildest passions. All the luxuries and elegances of life which that climate and the rich valleys of Lesbos could afford, were at their disposal ; exquisite gardens, where the rose and hyacinth spread perfume ; riverbeds ablaze with the oleander and wild pomegranate ; olivegroves and fountains, where the cyclamen and violet flowered with feathery maiden-hair ; pine-tree-shadowed coves, where they might bathe in the calm of a tideless sea ; fruits such as only the southern sun and sea-wind can mature ; marble cliffs,

starred with jonquil and anemone in spring, aromatic with myrtle and lentisk and samphire and wild rosemary through all the months ; nightingales that sang in May ; temples dim with dusky gold and bright with ivory ; statues and frescoes of heroic forms. In such scenes as these the Lesbian poets lived, and thought of Love. When we read their poems, we seem to have the perfumes, colours, sounds, and lights of that luxurious land distilled in verse. Nor was a brief but biting winter wanting to give tone to their nerves, and, by contrast with the summer, to prevent the palling of so much luxury on sated senses. The voluptuousness of Æolian poetry is not like that of Persian or Arabian art. It is Greek in its self-restraint, proportion, tact. We find nothing burdensome in its sweetness. All is so rhythmically and sublimely ordered in the poems of Sappho that supreme art lends solemnity and grandeur to the expression of unmitigated passion.

The world has suffered no greater literary loss than the loss of Sappho's poems. So perfect are the smallest fragments preserved in Bergk's Collection—the line, for example (p. 890), ἦρος ἄγγελος ἡμερόφωνος ἀήδων,* which Ben Jonson fancifully translated, “the dear glad angel of the spring, the nightingale”—that we muse in a sad rapture of astonishment to think what the complete poems must have been. Among the ancients Sappho enjoyed a unique renown. She was called “The Poetess,” as Homer was called “The Poet.” Aristotle quoted without question a judgment that placed her in the same rank as Homer and Archilochus. Plato in the *Phædrus* mentioned her as the tenth Muse. Solon, hearing one of her poems, prayed that he might not see death till he had learned

* Compare Simonides (Bergk, vol. iii. p. 1143):—

ἄγγελε κλυτὰ ἔαρος ἀδυόδμου,
κυανέα χελιδοῖ.

“Blithe angel of the perfume-breathing spring,
Dark-vested swallow.”

it. Strabo speaks of her genius with religious awe. Longinus cites her love-ode as a specimen of poetical sublimity. The epigrammatists call her Child of Aphrodite and Erôs, nursling of the Graces and Persuasion, pride of Hellas, peer of Muses, companion of Apollo. Nowhere is a hint whispered that her poetry was aught but perfect. As far as we can judge, these praises were strictly just. Of all the poets of the world, of all the illustrious artists of all literatures, Sappho is the one whose every word has a peculiar and unmistakable perfume, a seal of absolute perfection and inimitable grace. In her art she was unerring. Even Archilochus seems commonplace when compared with her exquisite rarity of phrase.

About her life—her brother Charaxus, her daughter Cleis, her rejection of Alcæus and her suit to Phaon, her love for Atthis and Anactoria, her leap from the Leucadian cliff—we know so very little, and that little is so confused with mythology and turbid with the scandal of the comic poets, that it is not worth while to rake up once again the old materials for hypothetical conclusions. There is enough of heart-devouring passion in Sappho's own verse without the legends of Phaon and the cliff of Leucas. The reality casts all fiction into the shade ; for nowhere, except, perhaps, in some Persian or Provençal love-songs, can be found more ardent expressions of overmastering emotion. Whether addressing the maidens, whom even in Elysium, as Horace says, Sappho could not forget ; or embodying the profounder yearnings of an intense soul after beauty, which has never on earth existed, but which inflames the hearts of noblest poets, robbing their eyes of sleep and giving them the bitterness of tears to drink—these dazzling fragments,

“ Which still, like sparkles of Greek fire,
Burn on through time and ne'er expire ”

are the ultimate and finished forms of passionate utterance, diamonds, topazes, and blazing rubies, in which the fire of the

soul is crystallized for ever. Adequately to translate Sappho was beyond the power of even Catullus : that love-ode, which Longinus called, " not one passion, but a congress of passions," and which a Greek physician copied into his book of diagnoses as a compendium of all the symptoms of corroding emotion, appears but languid in its Latin dress of " Ille mi par." Far less has any modern poet succeeded in the task : Rossetti, who deals so skilfully with Dante and Villon, is comparatively tame when he approaches Sappho. Instead of attempting, therefore, to interpret for English readers the charm of Sappho's style,* it is best to refer to pp. 874-924 of Bergk, where every vestige that is left of her is shrined.

Beside Sappho, Alcæus pales. His drinking-songs and war-songs have indeed great beauty ; but they are not to be named in the same breath, for perfection of style, with the stanzas of Sappho. Of his life we know a few not wholly uninteresting incidents. He was a noble of Mitylene, the capital of Lesbos, where he flourished as early as 611 B.C. Alcæus belonged to a family of distinguished men. His brothers Cicis and Antimenidas upheld the party of the oligarchy against the tyrant Melanchrus ; and during the troubles which agitated Mitylene after the fall of this despot, while other petty tyrants—Myrsilus, Megalagyrus, and the Cleanactids—were attempting to subdue the island, the three brothers ranged themselves uniformly on the side of the aristocracy. At first they seem to have been friendly with Pittacus. It was while fighting at his side against the Athenians at Sigeum that Alcæus threw his shield away—an exploit which, like Archilochus, he celebrated in a poem

* Those who are curious in the matter of metres will find the Sapphic stanza reproduced in English, with perfect truth of cadence, in Swinburne's " Sapphics " (*Poems and Ballads*). The imitations by Horace are far less close to the original. In an appendix I have given a crude version of Sappho's Ode to Aphrodite in accented Sapphics.

without apparently damaging his reputation for valour. Being a stout soldier, a violent partisan, the bard of revolutions, and the brother of a pair of heroes, he could trifle with this little accident, which less doughty warriors must have concealed. When Pittacus was chosen *Æsymnetes*, or dictator with despotic power for the preservation of public order, in 589 B.C., Alcæus and his brothers went into opposition and were exiled. All three of them were what in modern politics we should call High Tories. They could not endure the least approach to popular government, the slightest infringement of the rights of the nobility. During his exile Alcæus employed his poetic faculty in vituperating Pittacus. His satires were esteemed almost as pungent as those of Archilochus. But the liberal-minded ruler did not resent them. When Alcæus was on one occasion taken prisoner, he set him free, remarking that "forgiveness is better than revenge." Alcæus lived to be reconciled with him and to recognise his merits. As a trait in the domestic life and fortunes of the Greeks of this time, it is worth mentioning that Alcæus took refuge in Egypt during his banishment from Lesbos, and that his brother Antimenidas entered the service of the king of Babylon. In the same way two Englishmen in the times of the Edwards might have travelled in Germany or become soldiers of the Republic of Florence. Of the Greek oligarch who lent his sword to Nebuchadnezzar—in his wars perhaps against Jehoiakim or Pharaoh-Necho—we get a curious glimpse. Alcæus greeted him on his return in a poem of which we possess a fragment, and which may be paraphrased thus:—

"From the ends of the earth thou art come
Back to thy home ;
The ivory hilt of thy blade
With gold is embossed and inlaid ;
Since for Babylon's host a great deed
Thou didst work in their need,

Slaying a warrior, an athlete of might,
 Royal, whose height
 Lacked of five cubits one span—
 A terrible man."

We can fancy with what delight and curiosity Alcæus, who, as may be gathered from his poems, was an amateur of armour, examined this sword-handle, wrought perhaps from Æthiopian tusks by Egyptian artists with lotos-flowers or patterns of crocodiles, monkeys, and lions. This story of the polished Greek citizen's adventure among the Jews and Egyptians, known to us through Holy Writ, touches our imagination with the same strange sense of novelty as when we read of the Persian poet Sâdy, a slave in the camp of Richard Cœur de Lion's Crusaders.

Considering the life Alcæus led, it is not strange that he should have sung of arms and civic struggles. Many fragments, preserved in all probability from the *Stasiotica*, or Songs of Sedition, which were very popular among the ancients, throw light upon the stormier passages of his history. One of these pieces* describes the poet's armoury—his polished helmets and white horsehair plumes, the burnished brazen greaves that hang upon the wall, the linen breastplates and bucklers thrown in heaps about the floor, with Chalkidian blades, and girdles, and tunics. The most striking point about this fragment is its foppery. Alcæus spares no pains to make us know how bright his armour is, how carefully his greaves are fixed against the wall by pegs you cannot see (*πασσάλοις κρύπτοισι περικείμεναι*), how carelessly the girdles and small gear are tossed about in sumptuous disarray. The poem seems to reveal a luxurious nature delighting in military millinery. No Dorian would have described his weapons from this point of view, but would have rather told us how

* Bergk, p. 935.

often they had been used with effect in the field. The Æolian character is here tempered with Orientalism.

Of the erotic poems of Alcæus, only a very few and inconsiderable fragments have survived. Horace says of them, addressing his lyre :—

“Lesbio primum modulate civi,
Qui ferox bello, tamen inter arma,
Sive jactatam religârat udo
Littore navim,
Liberum et Musas Veneremque et illi
Semper hærentem puerum canebat ;
Et Lycum nigris oculis nigroque
Crine decorum.” *

Of Lycus we only know, on the authority of Cicero,† that he had a wart upon the finger, which Alcæus praised in one of his poems. It has also been conjectured that the line *οἶνος, ὦ φίλε παῖ, καὶ ἀλάθεια*, “wine, dear boy, and truth,” which Theocritus quotes as a proverb at the beginning of his Æolic Idyll, was addressed to Lycus. A fragment of far greater interest is the couplet preserved by Hephæstion,‡ in which Alcæus calls on Sappho by her name : “Violet-crowned, pure, sweetly-smiling Sappho ! I want to say something, but shame prevents me.” To this declaration Sappho replied : “If thy wishes were fair and noble, and thy tongue designed not to utter what is base, shame would not cloud thine eyes, but thou wouldst speak thy just desires.” This is all we know about the

* *Carm.* i. 32, thus translated by Conington :—

“Thou, strung by Lesbos’ minstrel hand,
The bard, who ’mid the clash of steel,
Or haply mooring to the strand,
His battered keel,

“Of Bacchus and the Muses sung,
And Cupid, still at Venus’ side,
And Lycus, beautiful and young,
Dark-haired, dark-eyed.”

† *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 28.

‡ *Sæ.* Bergk, p. 948.

love-passages between the greatest lyrists of the Æolian school. In this way do the ancient critics tantalize us. Aristotle,* in order to illustrate a moral proposition, Hephæstion, with a view to proving a metrical rule, fling these scraps of their wealth forth, little dreaming that after twenty centuries the men of new nations and other thoughts will eagerly collect the scraps, and long for more of that which might have been so freely lavished. Whether Sappho wrote her reply in maidenly modesty because the advances of Alcæus were really dishonourable, or whether she affected indignation to conceal a personal dislike for the poet, we cannot say. Aristotle or Hephæstion might probably have been able to tell us. But the one was only thinking of the signs of shame, while the attention of the other was riveted upon the “so-called *dodecasyllable Alcaic*.”

The most considerable remains of the lyrics of Alcæus are drinking-songs—praises of wine, combined with reflections upon life and appropriate descriptions of the different seasons. No time was amiss for drinking, to his mind : the heat of summer, the cold of winter, the blazing dogstar and the driving tempest, twilight with its cheerful gleam of lamps, midday with its sunshine—all suggest reasons for indulging in the cup. Not that we are justified in fancying Alcæus to have been a vulgar toper : he retained Æolian sumptuousness in his pleasures and raised the art of drinking to an æsthetic altitude. One well-known piece from the *Parænia* of Alcæus is capable of translation into Elizabethan rhymed verse, as follows :—

“ The rain of Zeus descends, and from high heaven
 A storm is driven :
 And on the running water-brooks the cold
 Lays icy hold :

* *Rhet.*, i. 9.

Then up ! beat down the winter ; make the fire
 Blaze high and higher ;
 Mix wine as sweet as honey of the bee
 Abundantly ;
 Then drink with comfortable wool around
 Your temples bound.
 We must not yield our hearts to woe, or wear
 With wasting care ;
 For grief will profit us no whit, my friend,
 Nor nothing mend :
 But this is our best medicine, with wine fraught
 To cast out thought."

The debt of Horace to Alcæus must have been immense. The fragment just translated is the original of the ninth ode of the first book. The fragment on the death of Myrsilus, *νῦν χρὴ μεθύσθην*, shows where Horace found the model for the last ode of the first book. Again, "O navis referent" (Hor. *Carm.* i. 14) is based on an ode of the Lesbian poet of which we possess a fragment.* Between the temperaments of Horace and of Alcæus, as between those of Catullus and of Sappho, there were marked similarities and correspondences. The poetry of both Horace and Alcæus was polished rather than profound, admirably sketched rather than richly coloured, more graceful than intense, less passionate than reflective. In Sappho and Catullus, on the other hand, we meet with richer and more ardent natures : they are endowed with keener sensibilities, with a sensuality more noble because of its intensity, with emotions more profound, with a deeper faculty of thought, that never loses itself in the shallows of "Stoic-Epicurean acceptance," but simply and exquisitely apprehends the facts of human life. Where Horace talks of Orcus and the Urn, Catullus sings :—

"Soles occidere et redire possunt,
 Nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux
 Nox est perpetua una dormienda."

* Bergk, p. 936.

This contrast between the polished sententiousness of Horace and the pathetic outcry of Catullus marks the difference between two classes of poets to whom Horace and Alcæus, Sappho and Catullus, respectively belong.

Of the other Lesbian poets, Erinna and Damophila, we know but little : the one survives in a single epigram—if we reject the epitaphs on Baucis : the other is a mere name. It is noticeable that of the four Lesbian poets three are women. We may remember that in Thebes, which was also an Æolian city, Myrtis and Corinna rivalled Pindar.

To the list of Æolian poets Anacreon, though an Ionian by birth and an Ionian in temperament, is generally added, because he cultivated the lyrical stanza of personal emotion. Into the Æolian style Anacreon introduced a new and uncongenial element. His passion had none of Sappho's fiery splendour, none of the haughtiness and restlessness which distinguished Alcæus. There was a vein of levity, almost of vulgarity, in the Ionians, which removed them from the altitudes of Dorian heroism and Æolian enthusiasm. This tincture of flippancy is discernible in Anacreon. Life and love come easily to him. The roses keep no secrets for his ears, such as they told to Sappho : they serve very well for garlands when he drinks, and have a pleasant smell—especially in myrrh. The wine-cup does not suggest to him variety of seasons,—the frozen streams of winter, the parched breath of the Dog-star,—as with Alcæus : he tipples and gets drunk. His loves too are facile—neither permanent nor tempestuous. The girls and boys of whom he sings were flute-players and cup-bearers, servants of a tyrant, *instrumenta libidinis*, chosen for their looks, as the poet had been selected for the sweetness of his lyre with twenty chords. He never felt the furnace of Sappho, whose love, however criminal in the estimation of modern moralists, was serious and of the soul. The difference between the lives of these three lyrists is very striking. Alcæus

was a politician and party leader. Sappho was the centre of a free society of female poets. Anacreon was the courtier and laureate of tyrants. He won his first fame with Polycrates, at whose death Hipparchus fetched him to Athens in a trireme of fifty oars. Between Bacchus and Venus he spent his days in palaces ; and died at the ripe age of eighty-five at Teos, choked, it is reported, by a grape-stone—a hoary-headed *roué*, for whom the rhyme of Walter Mapes might have been written :

“Meum est propositum,
In tabernâ mori,” &c.

It need not be remarked that of the genuine poems of Anacreon we possess but few (pp. 1011-1045 of Bergk). His great popularity in Greece led to innumerable imitations of his lighter style.* These are fully preserved in Bergk's Collection (pp. 1046-1108).

The Dorian style offers a marked contrast to the Æolian. In the case of the Ionian satirists and elegists, and in that of the Æolian lyrists, the national peculiarities of the art resulted from national qualities in the artists. This is not the case with the so-called Dorian poets. The great lyrists of this school are, with one exception, of extraction foreign to the Dorian tribe. Alcman was a Lydian ; Stesichorus acknowledged an Ionian colony for his fatherland ; Arion was a Lesbian ; Simonides and Bacchylides were Ionian ; Pindar was Bœotian ; Ibycus of Rhegium alone was a Dorian. Why then is the style called Dorian ? Because the poets, though not Dorian by birth, wrote for Dorian patrons in the land

* The people of Athens gave him a statue on their Acropolis. The Teians struck his portrait on coins. Critias said that his poems would last as long as the Cottabos in Hellas. He did in fact exactly represent one side, and that the least heroic side, of the character of the Greeks—their simple love of sensual pleasure. As mere Hedonism grew, so did the songs and the style of Anacreon gain in popularity, whereas the stormier passion of Sappho became unfashionable.

of Dorians, to add splendour to ceremonies and solemnities in vogue among the Dorians. The distinctive features of this, the most sublime branch of Greek lyrical poetry, have been already hinted at : these elaborate Choral Hymns, in which strophe answers to antistrophe, and epode to epode, chanted by bands of singers and accompanied at times by dancing, were designed to give expression, no longer to personal emotions, but to the feelings of great congregations of men engaged in the celebration of gods, and heroes, and illustrious mortals. Why this species of choral poetry received the patronage and name of the Dorian tribe may be seen by glancing at the institutions peculiar to this section of the Hellenic family. The Dorians, more than any other Greeks, lived in common and in public. Their children were educated, not at home, but in companies, beneath the supervision of state-officers. Girls as well as boys submitted to gymnastic training, and were taught to sacrifice domestic and personal to political and social interests. Tutored to merge the individual in the mass, habituated to associate together in large bodies, the Dorians felt no need of venting private feeling. Their personal emotions were stunted : they had no separate wants and wishes, aspirations and regrets, to utter. Yet the sense of melody and harmony which was rooted so profoundly in the Greek temperament needed some outlet even here ; while the gymnastic and athletic exercises practised by the Dorians rendered them peculiarly sensitive, not only to the beauties of the human body, but also to the refinements of rhythmical movement. The spiritual enthusiasm for great and glorious actions, which formed the soul of the Greek race, flamed with all the greater brilliancy among Dorians, because it was not narrowed, as among the Æolians, to the selfish passions of the individual, or diverted, as among Ionians, to meditation or satire ; but was concentrated on public interests, on religious and heroic traditions, on all the thoughts and feelings which

stimulate a large political activity. The Dorians required a poetry which should be public, which should admit of the participation of many individuals, which should give utterance to national enthusiasms, which should combine the movements of men and women in choric evolutions with the melodies of music and the sublime words of inspired prophecy. In brief, the Dorians needed poets able—

“to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God’s Almightiness, and what He works, and what He suffers to be wrought with high Providence. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave; whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and reflexes of man’s thoughts from within; all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness, to paint out and describe.”

But here arose a difficulty. With all their need of the highest and most elaborate poetry, with all their sensibility to beauty, the Dorians thought it beneath the dignity of a citizen to practise the arts. Their education, almost exclusively military and gymnastic, unfitted them, at all events in Sparta, for studies indispensable towards gaining proficiency in any science so elaborate as that of choral poetry. Drilled to abstinence, obedience, and silence, dwelling in a camp, without privacy or leisure, how could a Spartan, that automaton of the State, be expected to produce poetry, or excel in any fine art? A Spartan king, on being shown the most distinguished musician of his age, pointed to his cook as the best maker of black broth. Music, if music they must have; poetry, if poetry were required by some divinely implanted instinct; dancing, if dancing were a necessary compliment to the Deity; must be imported by these warriors from foreign lands. Thus the Spartans became the patrons of stranger artists, on whom they imposed their laws of taste. They pressed the flexible Ionian, the passionate Lesbian,

the languid Lydian, the acute Athenian, into their service, and made them use the crabbed Dorian speech. They said : We want such and such odes for our choruses ; we wish to amuse our youths and maidens, and to honour the gods with pompous harmonies ; you, men of art, write for us, sing for us ; but be careful to comprehend our character ; and remember that, though you are Ionians or Lesbians, your inspiration must be Dorian. They got what they required. The so-called Dorian lyric is a genuine product of the Dorian race, although its greatest masters were foreigners and aliens. Much after the same fashion did England patronise Handel in the last century ; in the same way may Handel's oratorios be called English music ; for though the English are not musicians, and are diffident in general of the artist class, yet neither Germans, nor Italians, nor French, have seen produced upon their soil such colossal works of art in the service of a highly intellectual religion.

It is interesting to reflect upon the influence of the Dorian race in the evolution of Greek art. That, as a nation, they possessed the germs of artistic invention, and that their character expressed itself very clearly in æsthetic forms, is evident from the existence of the Dorian style in architecture, and the Dorian mood in music, both of which reflect their broad simplicity and strength disdaining ornament. The same stamp they impressed upon Greek poetry, through the instruments they selected from other tribes. Had it not been for the strict legislation of Lycurgus, which, by forcing Sparta into a purely political development, and establishing a complete community of life among the citizens, checked the emergence of that individuality which is so all-important to the artist, Sparta might have counted her great sculptors, poets, musicians, orators, and painters, in rivalry with Pheidias, Sophocles, Damon, Pericles, Polygnotus. As it was, though without hands to paint and carve, without lips to sing and plead,

the stubborn Dorian race set its seal on a wide field of Greek art.*

The elaborate works of the choral lyrists may be regarded as the highly-wrought expansions of rudiments already existing among the Dorians. Alcman, Arion, and Stesichorus, the three masters who formed choral poetry from the materials indicated to us in the poems of Homer, and who had to blend in one harmonious whole the sister arts of dancing, music, and poetry, so as to present a pompous appeal to the intellect through speech, and through the ear and eye, found ready to their hands such simple songs as may be read in Bergk, pp. 1297-1303. The dithyramb of the women of Elis: "Come, hero, Dionysus, to the holy sea-temple, attended by the graces, and rushing on with oxen-hoof! Holy ox! Holy ox!" The chorus of the old men, men, and boys at Sparta: "We once were stalwart youths: we are; if thou likest, try our strength: we shall be; and far better too!" The march-song of the Spartans in their rhythmic revels: "Advance, boys, set your feet forward, and dance in the reel better still."—From these had to be trained the complex and magnificent work of art, which culminated in a Pythian ode of Pindar! Alcman was a native of Sardis, and a slave of Agesilaus the Spartan. He flourished at Sparta between 671 and 631 B.C., composing Parthenia for the maidens of Taygetus. Who does not know his lines upon the valley of Eurotas? "Sleep holds the mountain summits and ravines, the promontories and the water-courses; leaves, and creeping things, and whatsoever black earth breeds; and wild beasts of the hills, and bees, and monsters in the hollows of the dark blue deep; and all the wide-winged birds are sleeping." Junior to Alcman was Arion, who spent most of his

* It is unhistorical to confound the Dorians with the Spartans, who were a specially-trained section of the Dorian stock. Yet it will be seen that, in relation at least to lyric poetry, Sparta fairly may be taken as *the* Dorian state.

time with Periander at Corinth. His contribution to choral poetry was the elaboration of the Dithyramb. But of his work we have unfortunately not a single fragment left. The piece that bears his name (Bergk, p. 872) has to be ascribed to some tolerable poet of the Euripidean period. His life is involved in mythology; most beautiful is the oft-told tale of his salvation from the sea waves by an enamoured dolphin—a fish, by the way, which Athenæus dignified by the title of *φιλωῶδος τε καὶ φιλανλος* (song-loving and flute-loving), and which Aristotle calls *φιλόανθρωπος* (affectionate to men). Rather more is known about Stesichorus. He was a native of Himera in Sicily, but possibly a Locrian by descent. His parents called him Tisias, but he took his more famous name from his profession. Stesichorus is a title that might have been given to any chorus-master in a Greek city; but Tisias of Himera won it by being emphatically the author of the choric system. Antiquity recognised in him the inventor of Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode, with the corresponding movements of the dance, which were designated the Triad of Stesichorus. A remark made by Quintilian about this poet—that he sustained the burden of the Epos with his lyre—forms a valuable criticism on his style. In the days of Stesichorus, the epic proper had lost its vitality; but people still felt the liveliest interest in heroic legends, and loved to connect the celebration of the past with their ceremonies. A lyrical poet had therefore so to treat the myths of Hellas that choruses should represent them in their odes and semi-dramatic dances. It is probable that Stesichorus made far more use of mythical material than Pindar, dealing with it less allusively and adhering more closely to the epic form of narrative. When we hear of his ode, the Oresteia, being divided into three books (whatever that may mean), and read the titles of the rest—Cerberus, Cycnus, Scylla, Europa, the Sack of Troy, the Nostoi, and Geryonis, we are led to suspect that his choral compositions were something of the nature of

mediaeval mystery plays—semi-lyrical, semi-dramatic poems, founded on the religious legends of the past. Stesichorus did not confine himself to this species of composition, but wrote hymns, encomia, and pæans, like other professional lyrists who succeeded him, and invented a curious kind of love-tale from real life. One of these romantic poems, called Calycé, was about a girl, who loved purely but unhappily, and died. Another, called Rhadina, told the forlorn tale of a Samian brother and sister put to death by a cruel tyrant. It is a pity that these early Greek novels in verse are lost. We might have found in them the fresh originals of *Daphnis* and *Chloe*, or of the romances of *Tatius* and *Heliodorus*. Finally, Stesichorus composed fables, such as the *Horse and the Stag*, and pastorals upon the death of *Daphnis*, in which he proved himself true to his Sicilian origin, and anticipated *Theocritus*. Enough has been said about Stesichorus to show that he was a richly inventive genius—one of those facile and abundant natures who excel in many branches of art, and who give hints by which posterity may profit. Yet with all his genius he was not thoroughly successful. His pastorals and romances were abandoned by his successors ; his epical lyrics were lost in the tragic drama. Like many other poets, he failed by coming at a wrong moment, or else by adhering to forms of art which could not long remain in vogue. In his attempt to reconcile the epical treatment of mythology with the choric system of his own invention, he proved that he had not fully grasped the capabilities of lyrical poetry. In his endeavour to create an idyllic and romantic species, he was far before his age.

The remaining choral poets of the Dorian style, of whom the eldest, *Ibycus*, dates half a century later than *Arion*, received from their predecessors an instrument of poetical expression already nearly complete. It was their part to use it as skilfully as possible, and to introduce such changes as might render it more polished. Excellence of workmanship is

particularly noticeable in what remains of Ibycus, Simonides, Bacchylides. These latter lyrists are no longer local poets : under the altered circumstances of Hellas at the time of the Persian war, art has become Panhellenic, the artists cease to be the servants of one state or of one deity ; they range from city to city, giving their services to all who seek for them, and embracing the various tribes and religious rites of the collected Greeks in their æsthetic sympathy. Now, for the first time, poets began to sell their songs of praise for money. Simonides introduced the practice, which had something shocking in it to Greek taste, and which Plato especially censures as sophistic and illiberal in his *Protagoras*. Now, too, poets became the friends and counsellors of princes, mixing freely in the politics of Samos, Syracuse, Agrigentum, Thessaly ; aiding the tyrants Polycrates, Hiero, Theron, the Scopads, with their advice. Simonides is said to have suspended hostilities between Theron and Hiero by his diplomatic intercession after their armies had been drawn up in battle-array. Petrarch did not occupy a more important place among the princes and republics of mediæval Italy. Under these new conditions, and with this expansion of the poet's calling, the old character of the Dorian lyric changed. The title Dorian is now merely nominal, and the dialect is a conventional language consecrated to this style.

Ibycus was a native of Rhegium, a colony of mixed Ionians and Dorians. To which of these families he belonged is not certain. If we judged by the internal evidence of his poems, we should call him an Ionian ; for they are distinguished by voluptuous sweetness, with a dash of almost Æolian intensity. Ibycus was a poet-errant, carrying his songs from state to state. The beautiful story of the cranes who led to the discovery of his murder at Corinth, though probably mythical, like that of Arion's dolphin, illustrates the rude lives of these Greek troubadours, and shows in what respect the *sacer vates*, servant

of the Muses and beloved of Phœbus, was held by the people. Ibycus was regarded by antiquity as a kind of male Sappho. His odes, composed for birthday festivals and banquets, were dedicated chiefly to the praise of beautiful youths; and the legends which adorned them, like those of Ganymede or Tithonus, were appropriate to the erotic style. Aristophanes, in the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, makes Agathon connect him with Anacreon and Alcæus, as the three refiners of language. It is clear, therefore, that in his art Ibycus adapted the manner of Dorian poetry to the matter of Æolian or Ionian love-chants. Of his poetry we have but few fragments. The following seems to strike the keynote of his style: "Love once again looking upon me from his cloud-black brows, with languishing glances, drives me by enchantments of all kinds to the endless nets of Cypris: verily I tremble at his onset, as a chariot-horse, who hath won prizes, in old age goes grudgingly to try his speed in the swift race of cars." In another piece he compares the onset of Love to a downrush of the Thracian north wind armed with lightning. This fragment, numbered first in Bergk's Collection, is taken from Athenæus, who quotes it to prove the vehement emotion of the poet:—

"In spring Cydonian apple-trees,
Watered by fountains ever flowing
Through crofts unmown of maiden goddesses,
And young vines 'neath the shade
Of shooting tendrils, tranquilly are growing.
Meanwhile for me Love never laid
In slumber, like a north-wind glowing
With Thracian lightnings, still doth dart
Blood-parching madness on my heart,
From Kupris hurtling, stormful, wild,
Lording the man as erst the child."

It is interesting to compare the different metaphors whereby the early lyrists imaged the assaults of the Love-God. Sappho describes him in one place as a youth arrayed with a flame-coloured chlamys descending from heaven; in another

she calls him "a limb-dissolving, bitter-sweet, impracticable wild beast ;" again, she compares the state of her soul under the influence of love to oak-trees torn and shaken by a mountain whirlwind. Anacreon paints a fine picture of Love like a blacksmith, forging his soul and tempering it in icy torrents. The dubious winged figure armed with a heavy sword, which is carved upon the recently-discovered column from the Temple of Ephesus, if he be the Love-God, and not, as some conjecture, Death, seems to have been conceived in the spirit of these energetic metaphors. The Greeks, at the period of Anacreon and Ibycus, were far from having as yet imagined the baby Cupid of Moschus, the Epigrammatists, and the Alexandrian Anacreontics. He was still a terrible and passion-stirring power—no mere malicious urchin coming by night with drenched wings and unstrung bow to reward the poet's hospitality by wounding him ; no naughty boy who runs away from his mother and steals honeycombs, no bee-like elf asleep in rosebuds.

Simonides is a far more brilliant representative than Ibycus, both of Greek choral poetry in its prime, and also of the whole literary life of Hellas during the period which immediately preceded and followed the Persian war. He was born in the island of Ceos, of pure Ionian blood and breeding ; but the Ionians of Ceos were celebrated for their *σωφροσύνη* (reserve, or self-restraint), a quality strongly marked in the poems of Simonides. In his odes we do not trace that mixture of Æolian passion and that concentration upon personal emotions which are noticeable in those of Ibycus, but rather a Dorian solemnity of thought and feeling, qualifying Simonides for the arduous functions to which he was called, of commemorating in elegy and epigram and funeral ode the achievements of Hellas against Persia. Simonides belonged to a family of professional poets ; for the arts among the early Greeks were hereditary ; a father taught the trade of flute-playing and

chorus-leading and verse-making to his son, who, if he had original genius, became a great poet, as was the fate of Pindar ; or, if he were endowed with commonplace abilities, remained a journeyman in art without discredit to himself, performing useful functions in his native place.* Simonides exercised his calling of chorus-teacher at Carthæa in Ceos, and lived at the χορηγεῖον, or resort of the chorus, near the temple of Apollo. But the greater portion of his life, after he had attained celebrity, was passed with patrons,—with Hipparchus, who invited him to Athens, where he dwelt at amity with Anacreon, and at enmity with Pindar's master Lasos—with the Scopads and Aleuads of Thessaly, for whom he composed the most touching threnoi and the most brilliant panegyrics, of which fragments have descended to us ;—finally, with Hiero of Syracuse, who honoured him exceedingly, and when he died, consigned him to the earth with princely funeral pomp. The relations of Simonides to these patrons may be gathered from numerous slight indications, none of which are very honourable to his character. For instance, after receiving the hospitality of Hipparchus, he composed an epigram for the statue of Harmodius, in which he calls the murder of the tyrant “a great light rising upon Athens.” Again, he praised the brutal Scopas, son of Creon, in an ode which is celebrated, both as being connected with the most dramatic incident in the poet's life, and also as having furnished Plato with a theme for argument, and Aristotle with an ethical quotation—“To be a good man in very truth, a square without blame, is hard.” This

* The Dramatic art was hereditary among the Athenians. Æschylus left a son, Euphorion, and two nephews, Philocles and Astydamas, who produced tragedies. The last is reported to have written no fewer than two hundred and forty plays. Iophon the son and Sophocles the grandson of the great Sophocles were dramatists of some repute at Athens. Euripides had a nephew of his own name, and Aristophanes two sons who followed the same calling. It is only from families like the Bachs that we can draw any modern parallel to this transmission of an art from father to son in the same race.

proposition Plato discusses in the *Protagoras*, while Aristotle cites the phrase, τετράγωνος ἀνευ ψόγου (four-square without fault). From the general tenour of the fragments of this ode, from Plato's criticism, and from what is known about the coarse nature of Scopas, who is being praised, we must conjecture that Simonides attempted to whitewash his patron's character by depreciating the standard of morality. With Ionian facility and courtly compliment, he made excuses for a bad man by pleading that perfect goodness was unattainable. Scopas refused to pay the price required by Simonides for the poem in question, telling him to get half of it from the Dioscuri, who had also been eulogised. This was at a banquet. While the king was laughing at his own rude jest, a servant whispered to the poet that two goodly youths waited without, desiring earnestly to speak with him. Simonides left the palace, but found no one. Even as he stood looking for his visitors, he heard the crash of beams and the groans of dying men. Scopas with his guests had been destroyed by the falling of the roof, and Simonides had received a godlike guerdon from the two sons of Tyndareus. This story belongs, perhaps, to the same class as the cranes of Ibycus and the dolphin of Arion. Yet there seems to be no doubt that the Scopad dynasty was suddenly extinguished; for we hear nothing of them at the time of the Persian war, and we know that Simonides composed a threnos for the family.

The most splendid period of the life of Simonides was that which he passed at Athens during the great wars with Persia. Here he was the friend of Miltiades, Themistocles, and Pausanias. Here he composed his epigrams on Marathon, Thermopylæ, Salamis, Plataea—poems not destined to be merely sung or consigned to parchment, but to be carved in marble or engraved in letters of imperishable bronze upon the works of the noblest architects and statuaries. The genius of Simonides is unique in this branch of monumental poetry. His

couplets—calm, simple, terse, strong as the deeds they celebrate, enduring as the brass or stone which they adorned—animated succeeding generations of Greek patriots ; they were transferred to the brains of statesmen like Pericles and Demosthenes, inscribed upon the fleshy tablets of the hearts of warriors like Cleomenes, Pelopidas, Epaminondas. We are thrice fortunate in possessing the entire collection of these epigrams, unrivalled for the magnitude of the events they celebrate, and for the circumstances under which they were composed. When we reflect what would have become of the civilization of the world but for these Greek victories—when we remember that the events which these few couplets record, transcend in importance those of any other single period of history—we are almost appalled by the contrast between the brevity of the epigrams and the world-wide vastness of their matter. In reviewing the life of Simonides, after admitting that he was greedy of gain and not adverse to flattery, we are bound to confess that, as a poet, he proved himself adequate to the age of Marathon and Salamis. He was the voice of Hellas—the genius of Fame, sculpturing upon her brazen shield with a pen of adamant, in austere letters of indelible gold, the achievements to which the whole world owes its civilization. Happy poet ! Had ever any other man so splendid a heritage of song allotted to him ?

In style Simonides is always pure and exquisitely polished. The ancients called him the sweet poet—Melicertes—*par excellence*. His *σωφροσύνη*, or tempered self-restraint, gives a mellow tone not merely to his philosophy and moral precepts, but also to his art. He has none of Pindar's rugged majesty, volcanic force, gorgeous exuberance : he does not, like Pindar, pour forth an inexhaustible torrent of poetical ideas, chafing against each other in the eddies of breathless inspiration. On the contrary, he works up a few thoughts, a few carefully selected images, with patient skill, producing a perfectly harmonious

result, but one which is always bordering on the commonplace. Like all correct poets, he is somewhat tame, though tender, delicate, and exquisitely beautiful. Pindar electrifies his hearer, seizing him like the eagle in Dante's vision, and bearing him breathless through the ether of celestial flame. Simonides leads us by the hand along the banks of pleasant rivers, through laurel groves, and by the porticos of sunny temples. What he possesses of quite peculiar to his own genius is pathos—the pathos of romance. This appears most remarkably in the fragment of a threnos which describes Danaë afloat upon the waves at night.* It is with the greatest diffidence that I offer a translation of what remains one of the most perfect pieces of pathetic poetry in any literature :—

“When, in the carven chest,
 The winds that blew and waves in wild unrest
 Smote her with fear, she, not with cheeks unwet,
 Her arms of love round Perseus set,
 And said : O child, what grief is mine !
 But thou dost slumber, and thy baby breast
 Is sunk in rest,
 Here in the cheerless brass-bound bark,
 Tossed amid starless night and pitchy dark.
 Nor dost thou heed the scudding brine
 Of waves that wash above thy curls so deep,
 Nor the shrill winds that sweep,—
 Lapped in thy purple robe's embrace,
 Fair little face !

* Mr. Mahaffy, in a note to p. 100 of his *Social Life in Greece*, takes for granted that the “great fragment” alluded to above had escaped my notice, and corrects me for my error of omission. This shows that he had not read my chapter on the Lyric Poets with attention. I have known the Song of Danaë by heart ever since I could read Greek for pleasure ; and what prevented me in my first edition from introducing an English version of it after the sentence above, was the same motive that caused me to exclude all translations of Sappho—profound reverence. The Greek is so familiar to scholars that it would have been superfluous to reprint it. No English rendering satisfied me. What I have now inserted in the text, is an old attempt of my own to reproduce the meaning of Simonides.

But if this dread were dreadful too to thee,
 Then wouldst thou lend thy listening ear to me ;
 Therefore I cry,—Sleep babe, and sea be still,
 And slumber our unmeasured ill !

Oh, may some change of fate, sire Zeus, from thee
 Descend, our woes to end !
 But if this prayer, too overbold, offend
 Thy justice, yet be merciful to me !”

The careful development of simple thoughts in Simonides may best be illustrated by the fragment on the three hundred Spartans who died at Thermopylæ :—

“ Of those who died at Thermopylæ glorious is the fate and fair the doom ; their grave is an altar ; instead of lamentation, they have endless fame ; their dirge is a chant of praise. Such winding-sheet as theirs no rust, no, nor all-conquering time, shall bring to nought. But this sepulchre of brave men hath taken for its habitant the glory of Hellas. Leonidas is witness, Sparta’s king, who hath left a mighty crown of valour and undying fame.”

The antitheses are wrought with consummate skill ; the fate of the heroes is glorious, their doom honourable : so far the eulogy is commonplace ; then the same thought receives a bolder turn : their grave is an altar. We do not lament for them so much as hold them in eternal memory ; our very songs of sorrow become pæans of praise. What follows is a still further expansion of the leading theme : rust and time cannot affect their fame ; Hellas confides her glory to their tomb. Then generalities are quitted ; and Leonidas, the protagonist of Thermopylæ, appears.

In his threnoi Simonides has generally recourse to the common grounds of consolation, which the Ionian elegists repeat *ad nauseam*, dwelling upon the shortness and uncertainty and ills of life, and tending rather to depress the survivors on their own account than to comfort them for the dead.* In

* The reputation gained by Simonides among the ancients for the sorrow of his song is proved by the phrase of Catullus,—“ *Moestius lachrymis Simonideis* ” (more sad than tears shed by Simonides).

one he says, "Short is the strength of men, and vain are all their cares, and in their brief life trouble follows upon trouble ; and death, that no man shuns, is hung above our heads—for him both good and bad share equally." It is impossible, while reading this lachrymose lament, to forget the fragment of that mighty threnos of Pindar's which sounds like a trumpet-blast for immortality, and, trampling under feet the glories of this world, reveals the gladness of the souls who have attained Elysium :—

" For them the night all through,
In that broad realm below,
The splendour of the sun spreads endless light ;
'Mid rosy meadows bright,
Their city of the tombs with incense-trees,
And golden chalices
Of flowers, and fruitage fair,
Scenting the breezy air,
Is laden. There with horses and with play,
With games and lyres, they while the hours away.

" On every side around
Pure happiness is found,
With all the blooming beauty of the world ;
There fragrant smoke, upcurled
From altars where the blazing fire is dense
With perfumed frankincense,
Burned unto gods in heaven,
Through all the land is driven,
Making its pleasant place odorous
With scented gales and sweet airs amorous."

What has been said about Simonides applies in a great measure also to Bacchylides, who was his nephew, pupil, and faithful follower. The personality of Bacchylides, as a man and a poet, is absorbed in that of his uncle—the greater bard, the more distinguished actor on the theatre of the world. While Simonides played his part in public life, Bacchylides gave himself up to the elegant pleasures of society ; while Simonides celebrated in epigrams the military glories of the Greeks,

Bacchylides wrote wine-songs and congratulatory odes. His descriptions of Bacchic intoxication and of the charms of peace display the same careful word-painting as the description by Simonides of Orpheus, with more luxuriance of sensual suggestion. His threnoi exhibit the same Ionian despondency and resignation—a dead settled calm, an elegant stolidity of epicureanism. That this excellent, if somewhat languid, lyricist may receive his due meed of attention, I have selected his most important fragment, the *Praise of Peace*, for translation (Bergk, vol. iii. p. 1230):—

“To mortal men Peace giveth these good things :
 Wealth, and the flowers of honey-throated song ;
 The flame that springs
 On carven altars from fat sheep and kine,
 Slain to the gods in heaven ; and, all day long,
 Games for glad youths, and flutes, and wreaths, and circling wine.
 Then in the steely shield swart spiders weave
 Their web and dusky woof :
 Rust to the pointed spear and sword doth cleave ;
 The brazen trump sounds no alarms ;
 Nor is sleep harried from our eyes aloof,
 But with sweet rest my bosom warms :
 The streets are thronged with lovely men and young,
 And hymns in praise of boys like flames to heaven are flung.”

The tone common to Simonides and Bacchylides in funeral poems will be illustrated by the four following fragments : *—

“Being a man, say not what comes to-morrow,
 Nor, seeing one in bliss, how long ’twill last ;
 For wide-winged fly was ne’er of flight so fast
 As change to sorrow.

“Nay, not those elder men, who lived of yore,
 Of sceptred gods the half-immortal seed,
 Not even they to prosperous old age wore
 A life from pain and death and danger freed.

* See Bergk, vol. iii. pp. 1128, 1129, 1132, 1227.

“ Short is the strength of men, and vain their trouble,
Through their brief age sorrows on sorrows double ;
O'er each and all hangs death escaped by none ;
Of him both good and bad an equal lot have won.

“ For mortal men not to be born is best,
Nor e'er to see the bright beams of the day ;
Since, as life rolls away,
No man that breathes was ever alway blest.”

Here we must stop short in the front of Pindar—the Hamlet among these lesser actors, the Shakspeare among a crowd of inferior poets. To treat of Greek lyrical poetry and to omit Pindar is a paradox in action. Yet Pindar is so colossal, so much apart, that he deserves a separate study, and cannot be dragged in at the end of a bird's-eye view of a period of literature. At the time of Pindar poetry was sinking into mannerism. He by the force of his native originality gave it a wholly fresh direction, and created a style as novel as it was inimitable. Like some high mountain-peak, upon the borderland of plain and lesser hills, he stands alone, sky-piercing and tremendous in his solitary strength.

CHAPTER VI.

PINDAR.

His Life.—Legends connected with Him.—The Qualities of his Poetry.—The Olympic Games.—Pindar's Professional Character.—His Morality.—His Religious Belief.—Doctrine of a Future State.—Rewards and Punishments.—The Structure of his Odes.—The Proemia to his Odes.—His Difficulty and Tumidity of Style.

PINDAR, in spite of his great popularity among the Greeks, offers no exception to the rule that we know but little of the lives of the illustrious poets and artists of the world. His parents belonged to the town of Cynoscephalæ; but Pindar himself resided at Thebes, and spoke of Thebes as his native place—Θήβα μᾶτερ ἐμά. That his father was called Daiphantus appears tolerably certain; and we may fix the date of his birth at about 522 B.C. He lived to the age of seventy-nine; so that the flourishing period of his life exactly coincides with the great Persian struggle, in which he lived to see Hellas victorious. He had three children—a son, Daiphantus, and two daughters, Eumetis and Protomache. His family was among the noblest and most illustrious of Thebes, forming a branch of the ancient house of the Ægeidæ, who settled both at Thebes and Sparta in heroic times, and offshoots from whom were colonists of Thera and Cyrene. Thus many of the heroes celebrated by Pindar, and many of the illustrious men to whom he dedicates his odes, were of his own kin. Genius for the art seems to have been hereditary in the family of Pindar, as it was in that of Stesichorus.

and of Simonides: therefore, when the youth showed an aptitude for poetry, his father readily acceded to his wishes, and sent him to Athens to learn the art of composing for the chorus from Lasos, the then famous but now forgotten antagonist of the bard of Ceos. Before his twentieth year, Pindar returned to Thebes and took, it is said, instruction from the poetesses Myrtis and Corinna. To this period of his artistic career belongs the oft-told tale, according to which Corinna bade her pupil interweave myths with his panegyrics, and when, following her advice, he produced an ode in which he had exhausted all the Theban legends, told him *τῇ χειρὶ δέειν σπείρειν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὅλῳ τῷ θυλάκῳ*, that one ought to sow with the hand and not with the whole sack. Against both Myrtis and Corinna, Pindar entered the lists of poetical contest. Corinna is reported to have beaten him five times, and never to have been vanquished by her more illustrious rival. Pausanias hints that she owed her victories to her beauty, and to the fact that she wrote in a broad Æolic dialect, more suited to the ears of her judges than Pindar's Doric style. The same circumstance which ensured her this temporary triumph may have caused her ultimate neglect. The fragment we possess of Corinna—

*μεμφόμεν δὲ κῆ λιγούραν Μούρτιδ' ἰώνγα
ὅτι βάνα φούσ' ἔβα Πινδάραιο ποτ' ἔριν.*

"I blame the clear-voiced Myrtis for that, a woman, she contended against Pindar," is curiously at variance with her own practice. Its Æolisms prove how local and provincial her language must have been.

The history of Pindar's life is the record of his poetical compositions. He was essentially a professional artist, taking no active part in politics, and studying to perfect his poetry all through the perilous days of Salamis and Plataea—like Michael Angelo, who went on modelling and hewing through

the sack of Rome, the fall of Florence, the decline of Italian freedom, with scarce a word to prove the anguish of his patriot soul. Pindar, unlike his fellow-countrymen, did not side with the Persians, but felt enthusiasm for Athens, the *ἔρεισμα* "Ἑλλάδος (buttress of Hellas), as he calls her in a dithyramb* (fr. 4). For this he was made Proxenos of Athens, and received a present of 10,000 drachmas. It is said that the Thebans fined him for his implied reflections upon them, and that Athens paid the debt. These facts, if true, testify to the post of honour which a mighty poet occupied in Hellas, when the *vox et præterea nihil* of a bard, inspired indeed by muses, but dependent on a patron for his bread, was listened to with such jealous ears by the rulers of great cities. The last Isthmian ode shows in what a noble spirit Pindar felt the dangers of Hellas during her deadly strife with Persia, and how he could scarcely breathe for anxiety until the stone of Tantalus suspended over her had been arrested. In the Proemium he says :—

"For Cleander and his prime of beauty let some one, O ye youths, bear the glorious meed of toil to the splendid portals of his sire Telesarchus, the revel-song, which pays him for his Isthmian victory and for his might in Nemean games. For him I too, though grieved in soul, am asked to call upon the golden muse. Freed as we are from mighty griefs, let us not fall into the bereavement of victorious crowns, nor nurse our cares : but ceasing from vain sorrows, spread we honeyed song abroad thus after our great trouble : forasmuch as of a truth some god hath turned aside the stone of Tantalus which hung above our heads—intolerable suffering for Hellas. Me verily the passing away of dread hath cured not of all care ; yet it is ever better to notice what is present : for treacherous time is hung above the lives of men, rolling the torrent of their days. Still, with freedom on our side, men can cure even these evils ; and it is our duty to attend to wholesome hope."

Pindar passed his time chiefly at Thebes, where his home was. But he also visited the different parts of Greece, frequently staying at Delphi, where the iron chair on which

* This and all references are made to Bergk's text of Pindar.

he sat and sang was long preserved ; and also journeying to the houses of his patrons—Hiero of Syracuse, and presumably Theron of Agrigentum, and perhaps, too, Alexander of Macedon. Olympia must have often received him as a guest, as well as the island of Ægina, where he had many friends. Odes were sent by him to Cyrene, to Ceos, to Rhodes—on what tablets, we may wonder, adorned with what caligraphy from Pindar's stylus, in what casket worthy of the man who loved magnificence ? The Rhodians inscribed his seventh Olympian—the most radiant panegyric of the sea-born isle of Helios—in letters of gold on the walls of their temple of the Lindian Athene. In the midst of his artistic labours, and while serving many patrons, Pindar, as we shall see, preserved his dignity and loftiness of moral character.

Pindar is said to have died in the theatre at Argos, in the arms of Theoxenos, a youth whom he loved passionately, and whom he has praised in the most sublime strains for his beauty in a Scolion, the fragment of which we possess.* Anacreon choked by a grape-stone, Sophocles breathing out his life together with the pathetic lamentations of Antigone, Æschylus killed on the sea-shore by the eagle whose flight he had watched, Empedocles committing his fiery but turbid spirit to the flames of Etna, Sappho drowning her sorrows in the surf of the Leucadian sea, Ibycus, the poet-errant, murdered by land robbers, Euripides torn to pieces like his own Pentheus, Archilochus honoured in his death by an oracle that cursed his battle-foe, Pindar amid the plaudits of the theatre sinking back into the arms of his Theoxenos and dying in a noon-tide blaze of glory—these are the appropriate and dramatic endings which the literary gossips among the Greeks, always inventively ingenious, ascribed to some of their chief poets. *Se non son veri, son ben trovati.*

* See above, p. 133.

Some purely legendary details show the estimation in which Pindar was held by his countrymen. Multitudes of bees are said to have settled on his lips when he was an infant. Pan chose a hymn of his and sang it on the mountains, honouring a mortal poet with his divine voice. The Mother of the gods took up her dwelling at his door. Lastly, we have the famous story of the premonition of his death in dreams—a legend of peculiar significance, when we remember that Pindar, like Sir Thomas Browne, believed that “we are more than ourselves in our sleep,” and wrote :

“All by happy fate attain
 The end that frees them from their pain ;
 And the body yields to death,
 But the shape of vital breath
 Still in life continueth ;
 It alone is heaven’s conferring :
 Sleeps it when the limbs are stirring.
 But when they sleep, in many dreams it shows
 The coming consummation both of joys and woes.” *

Just before his death, then, Pindar sent to inquire of the oracle of Ammon what was best for man ; and the answer, which he had already himself anticipated in his commemoration of Trophonius and Agamedes, was—Death. Meanwhile Persephone appeared to him in his sleep, and told him that he should praise her in her own realm, although on earth he had left her, alone of the blest gods, unsung. Ten days afterwards he died. The hymn which Pindar composed for Persephone in Hades, was dictated to a Theban woman by his ghost—so runs the tale—and written down. After his death, Pindar received more than heroic honours. They kept his iron chair at Delphi ; and the priest of Phoebus, before he shut the temple gates, cried, “Let Pindar the poet go into the banquet of the god.” At Athens his statue was erected at the public

* Translated by Conington, from Fragment ii. of *Dirges*.

cost. At Thebes his house was spared in the ruin of two sieges :—

“ Lift not thy spear against the Muse’s bower ;
The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground.”

At Rhodes, as we have seen, an ode of his was sculptured on the temple walls of Pallas. Throughout the future, as long as Greek poetry endured, he was known emphatically by the title of ὁ λυρικός.

Pindar was famous, as these semi-mythical stories about his infancy and old age indicate, for piety. Unlike Horace, who calls himself *Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens*, Pindar was a devout and steadfast servant of his country’s gods. He dedicated a shrine or *ματρῶον* near his own house to the Mother of the gods, a statue to Zeus Ammon in Libya, and one to Hermes in the Theban agora. The whole of his poetry is impregnated with a lively sense of the divine in the world. Accepting the religious traditions of his ancestors with simple faith, he adds more of spiritual severity and of mystical morality than we find in Homer. Yet he is not superstitious or credulous. He can afford to criticise the Myths like Xenophanes and Plato, refusing to believe that a blessed god could be a glutton. In Pindar indeed we see the fine flower of Hellenic religion, free from slavish subservience to creeds and ceremonies, capable of extracting sublime morality from mythical legends, and adding to the old glad joyousness of the Homeric faith a deeper and more awful perception of superhuman mysteries. The philosophical scepticism which in Greece, after the age of Pericles, corroded both the fabric of mythology and the indistinct doctrines of theological monotheism, had scarcely yet begun to act.

Passing to the poetry of Pindar, we have a hard task before us. What can be said adequate to such a theme? What can

be left unsaid of the many thoughts that ought to be expressed? At the time of Pindar's youth, lyrical poetry in Greece was sinking into mannerism. He, by the force of his originality, gave it a wholly new direction, and, coming last of the great Dorian lyrists, taught posterity what sort of thing an ode should be. The grand pre-eminence of Pindar as an artist was due in a great measure to his personality. Frigid, austere, and splendid; not genial like that of Simonides, not passionate like that of Sappho, not acrid like that of Archilochus; hard as adamant, rigid in moral firmness, glittering with the strong keen light of snow; haughty, aristocratic, magnificent—the unique personality of the man Pindar, so irresistible in its influence, so hard to characterize, is felt in every strophé of his odes. In his isolation and elevation Pindar stands like some fabled heaven-aspiring peak, conspicuous from afar, girdled at the base with ice and snow, beaten by winds, wreathed round with steam and vapour, jutting a sharp and dazzling outline into cold blue ether. Few things that have life dare to visit him at his grand altitude. Glorious with sunlight and with stars, touched by rise and set of day with splendour, he shines when other lesser heights are dulled. Pindar among his peers is solitary. He had no communion with the poets of his day. He is the eagle; Simonides and Bacchylides are jackdaws. He soars to the empyrean; they haunt the valley mists. Noticing this rocky, barren, severe, glittering solitude of Pindar's soul, critics have not unfrequently complained that his poems are devoid of individual interest. Possibly they have failed to comprehend and appreciate the nature of this sublime and distant genius, whose character, in truth, is just as marked as that of Dante or of Michael Angelo.

Since I have indulged in one metaphor in the vain attempt to enter into some *rapprochement* with Pindar, let me proceed to illustrate the Pindaric influence—the impression produced by a sympathetic study of his odes upon the imagination saturated

with all that is peculiar in his gorgeous style—by the deliberate expansion of some similes, which are by no means mere ornaments of rhetoric, but illustrations carefully selected from the multitude of images forced upon the mind during a detailed perusal of his poetry. One of the common names for Pindar is the Theban Eagle. This supplies us with the first image, which may be conveyed in the very words of Dante:*

“In dreams I seemed to see an eagle hovering in air on wings of gold, with pinions spread and ready to swoop. I thought I was on the spot where Ganymede was taken from his comrades and borne aloft to the celestial consistory. I pondered—peradventure the great bird only strikes this hill and peradventure scorns to snatch elsewhere his prey. Then it seemed to me that, after wheeling a while, it swooped, terrible like lightning, and caught me up into the sphere of flame; and there I thought that it and I both burned; and so fiercely did the fire in my imagination blaze, that sleep no longer could endure, but broke.”

This simile describes the rapidity and fierceness of Pindar's spirit, the atmosphere of empyreal splendour into which he bears us with strong wings and clinging talons. Another image may be borrowed from Horace,† who says,

“Fervet immensusque ruit profundo Pindarus ore;”

likening the poet to a torrent, unrestrained, roaring to the woods and precipices with a thunderous voice. This image does not, like the other, fix our attention upon the quality peculiar to Pindar among all the poets of the world—splendour, fire, the blaze of pure effulgence. But it does suggest another characteristic, which is the stormy violence of his song, that chafes within its limits and seems unable to advance

* *Purg.*, ix. 19.

† *Carm.*, iv. 2. Translated thus by Conington:

“Pindar, like torrent from the steep
Which, swollen with rain, its banks o'erflows,
With mouth unfathomably deep,
Foams, thunders, glows.”

quickly enough in spite of its speed. This violence of Pindar's style, as of some snow-swollen Alpine stream, the hungry Arve or death-cold Lutschine, leaping and raging among granite boulders, has misled Horace into the notion that Pindar's odes are without metrical structure :

“ numerisque fertur
Lege solutis : ”

whereas we know that, while pursuing his eagle-flight to the sun, or thundering along his torrent-path, Pindar steadily observed the laws of Strophé, Antistrophé, and Epode with consummate art. A third figure may be chosen from Pindar* himself.

“ As when a man takes from his wealthy hand a goblet foaming with the dew of the grapé, and gives it with healths and pledges to his youthful son-in-law to bear from one home to the other home, golden, the crown of his possessions, gracing the feast and glorifying his kinsman, and makes him in the eyes of the assembled friends to be admired for his harmonious wedlock : so I, sending outpoured nectar, the Muse's gift, to conquering heroes, the sweet fruit of the soul, greet them like gods, victors at Olympia and Pytho.”

Then too he adds : “ With the lyre and with the various voices of flutes† I have come with Diagoras across the sea, chanting the wave-born daughter of the Cyprian goddess and the bride of Helios, island Rhodes.” In this passage we get a lively impression of some of the marked qualities of Pindar. Reading his poetry is like quaffing wine that bubbles in a bowl of gold. Then too there is the picture of the poet, gorgeously attired, with his singing robes about him, erect upon the prow of a gilded galley, floating through dazzling summer-waves toward the island of his love, Rhodes, or Sicily, or Ægina. The lyre and the flute send their clear sounds across the sea. We pass

* 7th Ol.

† Compare this with the passage in Pythian, iii. 68, where Pindar describes himself *Ἰόνιαν τέμνων θάλασσαν*.

temple and citadel on shore and promontory. The banks of oars sweep the flashing brine. Meanwhile the mighty poet stretches forth his golden cup of song to greet the princes and illustrious athletes who await him on the marble quays. Reading Pindar is a progress of this pompous kind. Pindar, as one of his critics remarks, was born and reared in splendour : splendour became his vital atmosphere. The epithet *φιλάγλαος*, which he gives to Girgenti, suits himself. The splendour-loving Pindar is his name and title for all time. If we search the vocabulary of Pindar to find what phrases are most frequently upon his lips, we shall be struck with the great preponderance of all words that indicate radiance, magnificence, lustre. To Pindar's soul splendour was as elemental as harmony to Milton's. Of the graces, Aglaia must have been his favourite. Nor, love as he did the gorgeousness of wealth, was it mere transitory pomp, the gauds and trappings of the world, which he admired. There must be something to stir the depths of his soul—beauty of person, or perfection of art, or moral radiance, or ideal grandeur. The blaze of real magnificence draws him as the sun attracts the eagle ; he does not flit moth-like about the glimmer of mere ephemeral lights.

After these three figures, which illustrate the fiery flight, the torrent-fulness, the intoxicating charm of Pindar, one remains by which the magnetic force and tumult of his poetry may be faintly adumbrated. He who has watched a sunset attended by the passing of a thunderstorm in the outskirts of the Alps, who has seen the distant ranges of the mountains alternately obscured by cloud and blazing with the concentrated brightness of the sinking sun, while drifting scuds of hail and rain, tawny with sunlight, glistening with broken rainbows, clothe peak and precipice and forest in the golden veil of flame-irradiated vapour—who has heard the thunder bellow in the thwarting folds of hills, and watched the lightning, like a snake's tongue, flicker at intervals amid gloom and glory—knows in Nature's

language what Pindar teaches with the voice of Art. It is only by a strained metaphor like this that any attempt to realize the *Sturm und Drang* of Pindar's style can be communicated. In plainer language, Pindar, as an artist, combines the strong flight of the eagle, the irresistible force of the torrent, the richness of Greek wine, the majestic pageantry of Nature in one of her sublimer moods.

Like all the great lyrists of the Dorian School, Pindar composed odes of various species—Hymns, Prosodia, Parthenia, Threnoi, Scolia, Dithyrambs, as well as Epinikia. Of all but the Epinikian Odes we have only inconsiderable fragments left ; yet these are sublime and beautiful enough to justify us in believing that Pindar surpassed his rivals in the Threnos and the Scolion as far as in the Epinikian Ode. Forty-four of his poems we possess entire—fourteen Olympians, twelve Pythians, eleven Nemeans, seven Isthmians. Of the occasions which led to the composition of these odes something must be said. The Olympic games were held in Elis once in five years, during the summer : their prize was a wreath of wild olive. The Pythian games were held in spring, on the Crissæan plain, once in five years : their prizes were a wreath of laurel and a palm. The Nemean games were held in the groves of Nemea, near Cleonæ, in Argolis, once in three years : their prize was a wreath of parsley. The Isthmian games were held at Corinth, once in three years : their prize was a wreath of pine, native to the spot. The Olympic festival honoured Zeus ; that of Pytho, Phœbus ; that of Nemea, Zeus ; that of the Isthmus, Poseidon. Originally they were all of the nature of a *πανάγυρις* or national assembly at the shrine of some deity local to the spot, or honoured there with more than ordinary reverence. The Isthmian games in particular retained a special character. Instituted for an Ionian deity, whose rites the men of Elis refused to acknowledge, they failed to unite the whole Greek race. The Greek games, like the Schwing-feste and shooting

matches of Switzerland, served as recurring occasions of reunion and fellowship. Their influence in preserving a Pan-hellenic feeling was very marked. During the time of the feast, and before and after, for a sufficient number of days to allow of travellers journeying to and from Olympia and Delphi, hostilities were suspended throughout Hellas ; safe-conduct was given through all states to pilgrims. One common feeling animated all the Greeks at these seasons : they met in rivalry, not of arms on the battle-field, but of personal prowess in the lists. And though the various families of the Hellenic stock were never united, yet their games gave them a common object, and tended to the diffusion of national ideas.

Let us pause to imagine the scene which the neighbourhood of Olympia must have presented, as the great recurring festival of the Greek race approached—a festival in the fullest sense of the word popular, but at the same time consecrated by religion, dignified by patriotic pride, adorned with Art. The full blaze of summer is overhead ; plain and hill-side yield no shade but what the spare branches of the olive and a few spreading pines afford. Along the road throng pilgrims and deputies, private persons journeying modestly, and public ambassadors gorgeously equipped at the expense of their state. Strangers from Sicily, or Cyrene, or Magna Græcia, land from galleys on the coast of Elis. Then there are the athletes with their trainers—men who have been in rude exercise for the prescribed ten months, and whose limbs are in the bloom of manly or of boyish strength. Sages, like Gorgias, or Prodicus, or Protagoras, are on their way, escorted by bands of disciples, eager to engage each other in debate beneath the porticos of the Olympian Zeus. Thales or Anaxagoras arrives, big with a new theory of the universe. Historians like Herodotus are carrying their scrolls to read before assembled Hellas. Epic poets and rhapsodes are furnished with tales of heroes, freshly coined from their own brains, or conned

with care from Homer. Rich men bring chariots for racing or display ; the more a man spends at Olympia, the more he honours his native city. Women, we need not doubt, are also on the road—*Hetairæ* from Corinth, and Cyprus, and Ionia. Sculptors show models of their skill. Potters exhibit new shapes of vases, with scrolls of honeysuckle wreathing round the pictured image of some handsome boy, to attract the eyes of buyers. Painters have their tablets and colours ready. Apart from these more gay and giddy servants of the public taste, are statesmen and diplomatists, plenipotentiaries despatched to feel the pulse of Hellas, negotiators seeking opportunities for safe discussion of the affairs of rival cities. Every active brain, or curious eye, or wanton heart, or well-trained limb, or skilful hand, or knavish wit may find its fit employment here. A mediæval pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella or St. Thomas of Canterbury was nothing to this exodus of wit in Greece.

As they approached Olympia, a splendid scene burst upon the travellers' eyes—the plain of Elis, rich, deep-meadowed, hoary with olive-trees. One cried to the other, There is the hill of Cronion ! There is the grove of Altis ! Thither flows Alpheus to the sea ! Those white and glittering statues are the portraits of the victors ! That temple is the house of everlasting Zeus ; beneath its roof sits the Thunderer of Pheidias ! Every step made the journey more exciting. By the bed of the Alpheus, tawny in midsummer with dusty oleander-blossoms, the pilgrims passed. At last they enter the precincts of Olympian Zeus : the sacred enclosure is alive with men ; the statues among the trees are scarcely more wonderful in their glittering marble than are the bodies of the athletes moving beneath them. The first preoccupation of every Greek who visited Olympia was to see the statue of Zeus. Not to have gazed upon this masterpiece of Pheidias was, according to a Greek proverb, the unhappiness of life. In

this, his greatest work, the Athenian sculptor touched the highest point of art, and incarnated the most sublime conception of Greek religious thought. The god was seated on his throne ; but, even so, the image rose to the height of forty feet, wrought of pure ivory and gold. At his feet stood figures symbolical of victory in the Olympian games : among them the portrait of Pantarkes, himself a victor, the youth whom Pheidias loved. In designing his great statue the sculptor had in mind those lines of Homer which describe Zeus nodding his ambrosial locks, and shaking Olympus. That he had succeeded in presenting to the eye all that the Greek race could imagine of godlike power and holiness and peace, was attested not only by the universal voice of Hellas, but also by the Romans who gazed as conquerors upon the god. Lucius Paulus Æmilius, we are told, after the battle of Pydna, swept Greece, and coming to Olympia, saw the Pheidian Zeus. He shuddered, and exclaimed that he had set mortal eyes upon the deity incarnate. Yet Paulus was a Roman trampling with his legionaries the subject states of fallen Hellas. Cicero proclaimed that Pheidias had copied nothing human, but had carved the ideal image existing in an inspired mind.

Zeus, it must be remembered, was the supreme god of the Aryan race, the purest divinity of the Greek cultus. He was called Father, Sire of gods and men. Therefore his presence in the Panhellenic temple was peculiarly appropriate and awe-inspiring. We may imagine the feelings of an athlete coming to struggle for the fame of his own city, when he first approached this statue in the august Olympian shrine. The games were held at the time of a full moon ; through the hypæthral opening of the temple-roof fell the silver rays aslant upon those solemn lineaments, making the glow of ivory and gold more solemn in the dimness of a wondrous gloom.

Presidents chosen from the people of Elis and named

Hellandodikai, awarded the prizes and controlled the conduct of the games. From their decision, in cases of doubt, there was a final appeal to the assembly of Elis. In the morning the heralds opened the lists with this proclamation :* "Now begins the contest that dispenses noblest prizes ; time tells you to delay no longer." When the runners were ready, the heralds started them with these words, "Put your feet to the line and run." At the end of the day they cried, "Now ceases the contest that dispenses noblest prizes ; time tells you to delay no longer." The victor was crowned with wild olive, and led by his friends to the temple of Zeus. On the way they shouted the old Archilochian chorus, *τῆνέλλα καλλίνυκε*, to which Pindar alludes in the beginning of his 9th Olympian : "The song of Archilochus uttered at Olympia, the triple cry of Hail Victorious ! was enough to conduct Epharmostus, leading the revel to the Cronian hill with his comrades. But now, from the far-darting bows of the Muses, approach Zeus of the blazing thunder and the holy jutting land of Elis with these mightier shafts." Sacrifice and banquet took place in the evening ; and happy was the athlete who, in this supreme moment, was greeted by Pindar with attendant chorus and musicians of the flute and lyre. Three Olympians, which seem to have been composed and chanted on the spot, survive—the 4th, the 8th, the 10th. The Proemia to these odes, two of which are remarkably short, indicating the haste in which they had been prepared, sufficiently establish this fact. "Supreme hurler of the thunderbolt that never tires, Zeus ! Thy festival recurring with the season brings me with sound of lyre and song to witness august games." "Parent of golden-crowned contests, Olympia, mistress of truth," &c. But it could not be expected that the more elaborate of Pindar's compositions should be ready on

* Bergk, *Poetae Lyrici*, p. 1301.

such occasions. It usually happened that the victor either found Pindar at Olympia, or sent a message to him at Thebes, and bespoke an ode, adding gifts in accordance with the poet's rank and fame. Then Pindar composed his *Epinikian*, which was sung when the conqueror returned to his own city. The ode would be repeated on successive anniversaries at banquets, sacrificial festivals, and processions in honour of the victory. The 9th Olympian, which has been already quoted, was, for example, sung at a banquet in honour of Epharmostus of Opus, after the altar of Ajax, son of Oileus, had been crowned. Pindar, as we find from frequent allusions in the odes, had such a press of work that he often delayed sending his poems at the proper time, and had to excuse himself for neglect. In the second Isthmian he records a delay of two years. We may add that he did not disdain to accept money for his toil. In the 11th Pythian he says: "Muse, it is thy part, since thou hast contracted to give thy voice for gold, to set it going in various ways." In the Proemium to the second Isthmian he somewhat bitterly laments the necessity that made him sell his songs:

"The men of old, Thrasybulus, who climbed the chariot of the gold-crowned Muses, and received a famous lyre, lightly shot their arrows of honey-voiced hymns in praise of boys, of him whose beauty kept the summer bloom of youth, that sweetest souvenir of Aphrodite throned in joy. For the Muse as yet loved not gain, nor worked for hire, nor were sweet and tender songs with silvered faces sold by Terpsichore. But now she bids us keep the Argive's speech in mind; and verily it hits the truth; that Money, Money, Money makes the man. He spoke it when deserted of his riches and his friends."

Yet we must not suppose that Pindar sang slavishly the praise of every bidder. He was never fulsome in his panegyric. He knew how to mingle eulogy with admonition. If his theme be the wealth of a tyrant like Hiero, he reminds him of the dangers of ambition and the crime of avarice. Arcesilaus of Cyrene is warned* to remit his sentence of banish-

* Pyth. iv. 263.

ment in favour of a powerful exile. Victors, puffed up with the pride of their achievements, hear from him how variable is the life of man, how all men are mere creatures of a day. Handsome youths are admonished to beware of lawlessness and shun incontinence. Thus Pindar, while suiting his praises to the persons celebrated, always interweaves an appropriate precept of morality. There was nothing that he hated more than flattery and avarice, and grasping after higher honours than became his station. In him more than in any other poet were apparent the Greek virtues of *ἐνκοσμία*, *σωφροσύνη*, and all the moral and artistic qualities which were summed up in the motto *μηδὲν ἄγαν*.^{*} Those who are curious to learn Pindar's opinions on these points may consult the following passages: † Nem. viii. 32; Nem. vii. 65; Pyth. xi. 50; Isthm.

^{*} These pregnant words imply self-government and self-restraint in obedience to a high ideal of order and symmetry, as opposed to the perils and the uncomeliness of extravagance.

† "Hateful of a truth, even in days of old, was treacherous blandishment, attendant of wily words designing guile, mischief-making slander, which loves to wrest the splendour of fame and to maintain the unreal honours of ignoble men. Never may such be my temper, Zeus, our father! but may I follow the plain paths of life, that, dying, I may leave no foul fame to my children. Some pray for gold, and some for vast lands; but I to please my countrymen, and so to hide my limbs beneath the earth, praising where praise is due, and sowing blame for sinful men. Virtue grows and blooms, like a tree that shoots up under fostering dews, when skilled men and just raise it towards the liquid air." . . . "Among my fellow-citizens I look with brightness in my eye, not having overstepped due bounds, and having removed from before my feet all violence. May future time come kindly to me." . . . "May I obtain from heaven the desire of what is right, aiming at things within my powers in my prime of life. For finding, as I do, that the middle status in a city flourishes with more lasting prosperity, I deprecate the lot of kings." . . . "Passing the pleasure of the days I gently glide towards old age and man's destined end: for all alike we die: yet is our fortune unequal; and if a man seek far, short is his strength to reach the brazen seat of the gods: verily winged Pegasus cast his lord Bellerophon, who sought to come into the dwellings of the heaven, unto the company of Zeus." . . . "Seek not to be Zeus . . . mortal fortunes are for mortal men."

vii. 40 ; Isthm. v. 14 ; and lastly, Pyth. x. 22, which contains this truly beautiful description of a thoroughly successful life, as imagined by a Greek :

“That man is happy and songworthy by the skilled, who, victorious by might of hand or vigour of foot, achieves the greatest prizes with daring and with strength ; and who in his lifetime sees his son, while yet a boy, crowned happily with Pythian wreaths. The brazen heaven, it is true, is inaccessible to him ; but whatsoever joys we race of mortals touch, he reaches to the farthest voyage.”

With this we may compare the story of happy lives told by Cræsus to Solon, and the celebrated four lines of Simonides : —“Health is best for a mortal man ; next beauty ; thirdly, well-gotten wealth ; fourthly, the pleasure of youth among friends.”

Closely connected with Pindar's ethical beliefs were his religious notions, which were both peculiar and profound. Two things with regard to his theology deserve especial notice—its conscious criticism of existing legends, and its strong Pythagorean bias, both combined with true Hellenic orthodoxy in all essentials. One of the greatest difficulties in forming an exact estimate of the creed of a philosophical Greek intellect, is to know how to value the admixture of scientific scepticism on the one hand, and of purer theism on the other. About Pindar's time the body of Hellenic mythology was being invaded by a double process of destructive and constructive criticism. Xenophanes, for example, very plainly denounced as absurd the anthropomorphic Pantheon made in the image of man, while he endeavoured to substitute a cult of the One God, indivisible and incognisable. Plato still further developed the elements suggested by Xenophanes. But there was some inherent incapacity in the Greek intellect for arriving at monotheism by a process of rarefaction and purification. The destructive criticism which in Xenophanes, Pindar, and Plato, had assailed the

grosser myths, dwindled into unfruitful scepticism. The attempts at constructing a rational theosophy ended in metaphysics. Morality was studied as a separate branch of investigation, independent of destructive criticism and religious construction. Meanwhile the popular polytheism continued to flourish, though enfeebled, degenerate, and disconnected from the nobler impulses of poetry and art. In Pindar the process of decadence had not begun. He stood at the very highest point which it was possible for a religious Greek to reach—combining the æsthetically ennobling enthusiasm for the old Greek deities with so much critical activity as enabled him to reject the grosser myths, and with that moderate amount of theological mysticism which the unassisted intellect of the Greeks seemed capable of receiving without degeneracy into puerile superstition. The first Olympian ode contains the most decided passages in illustration of his critical independence of judgment :

“Impossible is it for me to call one of the blessed ones a glutton : I stand aloof : loss hath often overtaken evil speakers.”

Again :

“Truly many things are wonderful ; and it may be that in some cases fables dressed up with cunning fictions beyond the true account falsify the traditions of men. But Beauty, which is the author of all delicious things for mortals, by giving to these myths acceptance, oftentimes makes even what is incredible to be credible : but succeeding time gives the most certain evidence of truth ; and for a man to speak nobly of the gods is seemly ; for so the blame is less.”

These two passages suffice to prove how freely Pindar handled the myths, not indeed exposing them to the corrosive action of mere scepticism, but testing them* by the higher standard of the healthy human conscience. When he refuses to believe that the immortals were cannibals and ate the limbs of Pelops,

* Compare for a similar freedom of judgment Antigone's famous speech on the unwritten Laws.

he is like a rationalist avowing his disbelief in the savage doctrine of eternal damnation. His doubt does not proceed from irreligion, but from faith in the immutable holiness of the gods, who set the ideal standard of human morality. What seems to him false in the myths, he attributes to the accretions of ignorant opinion and vain fancy round the truth.

The mystical element of Pindar's creed, whether we call it Orphic or Pythagorean, is remarkable for a definite belief in the future life, including a system of rewards and punishments, for the assertion of the supreme tribunal of conscience,* and finally, for a reliance on rites of purification. The most splendid passage in which these opinions are expressed by Pindar is that portion of the second Olympian in which he describes the torments of the wicked and the blessings of the just beyond the grave :—

“Among the dead, sinful souls at once pay penalty, and the crimes done in this realm of Zeus are judged beneath the earth by one who gives sentence under dire necessity.

“But the good, enjoying perpetual sunlight equally by night and day, receive a life more free from woes than this of ours ; they trouble not the earth with strength of hand, nor the water of the sea for scanty sustenance ; but with the honoured of the gods, all they who delighted in the keeping of their oath pass a tearless age : the others suffer woe on which no eye can bear to look. Those who have thrice endured on either side the grave to keep their spirits wholly free from crime, journey on the road of Zeus to the tower of Cronos : where round the islands blow breezes ocean-borne : and flowers of gold burn some on the land from radiant trees, and others the wave feeds : with necklaces whereof they twine their hands and brows, in the just decrees of Rhadamanthus, whom father Cronos has for a perpetual colleague, he who is spouse of Rhea throned above all gods.

“Peleus and Cadmus are numbered among these : and thither was Achilles brought by his mother when she swayed the heart of Zeus with prayer : he who slew Hector, the invincible firm pillar of Troy, and gave Cynus to death and Eo's Æthiopian son.”

* The conscience forms a strong point in the ethical systems of many of the ancients, especially of Plato, of Lucretius, of Persius—authors otherwise dissimilar enough as representing three distinct species of thought. In Mythology it receives an imperfect embodiment in the Erinyes, who,

The following fragments from Threnoi* translated by Professor Conington further illustrate Pindar's belief in a future state of weal or woe :

“They from whom Persephone
 Due atonement shall receive
 For the things that made to grieve,
 To the upper sunlight she
 Sendeth back their souls once more,
 Soon as winters eight are o'er.
 From those blessed spirits spring
 Many a great and goodly king,
 Many a man of glowing might,
 Many a wise and learned wight :
 And while after-days endure,
 Men esteem them heroes pure.”

And again :

“Shines for them the sun's warm glow
 When 'tis darkness here below :
 And the ground before their towers,
 Meadow-land with purple flowers,
 Teems with incense-bearing treen,
 Teems with fruit of golden sheen.
 Some in steed and wrestling feat,
 Some in dice take pleasure sweet,
 Some in harping : at their side
 Blooms the spring in all her pride.
 Fragrance all about is blown
 O'er that country of desire.
 Ever as rich gifts are thrown
 Freely on the far-seen fire,
 Blazing from the altar-stone.

* * * * *

But the souls of the profane,
 Far from heaven removed below,

however, are spiritual forces acting from without, rather than from within, upon the criminal. Purifying rites belonged to the Mysteries or *τελεται* ; they formed a prominent feature in the Ethics of Empedocles and Pythagoras, and an integral part of the cult of Apollo and the nether deities. Philosophers like Plato rejected them as pertaining to ceremonial superstition.

* Bunsen's *God in History*, vol. ii. pp. 144 and 136.

Flit on earth in murderous pain
 'Neath the unyielding yoke of woe ;
 While pious spirits tenanting the sky
 Chant praises to the mighty one on high."

For Pindar's conception of the destinies of frail humanity, take this sublime but melancholy ending to an ode* which has been full of triumphant exultation : " Brief is the growing-time of joy for mortals, and briefly too doth its flower fall to earth shaken by fell fate. Things of a day ! what are we—and what are we not ! A shadow's dream is man. But when the splendour that God gives descends, then there remains a radiant light and gladsome life for mortals." Compare with this the opening of the sixth Nemean :

" One is the race of men, and one the race of gods ; from one mother we both draw breath. But a total difference of force divides us, since man's might is nought, while brazen heaven abideth a sure seat for aye. Nevertheless, we are not all unlike immortals either in our mighty soul or strength of limb, though we know not to what goal of night or day fate hath written down for us to run."

Passing to the consideration of Pindar purely as an artist, we may first examine the structure of his odes, and then illustrate the qualities of his poetry by reference to some of the more splendid Proemia and descriptions. The task which lay before him when he undertook to celebrate a victory at one of the Greek games, was this. Some rich man had won a race with his chariot and horses, or some strong man had conquered his competitors by activity or force of limb. Pindar had to praise the rich man for his wealth and liberality, the strong man for his endurance of training and personal courage or dexterity. In both cases the victor might be felicitated on his good fortune—on the piece of luck which had befallen him ; and if he were of comely person or illustrious blood, these also offered topics for congratulation. The three chief common-

* Pyth. viii.

places of Pindar, therefore, are ὄλβος, ἀρετή, εὐτυχία, wealth or prosperity, manliness or spirit, and blessings independent of both, god-given, not acquired. But it could not be that a great poet should ring the changes only on these three subjects, or content himself with describing the actual contest, which probably he had not witnessed. Consequently Pindar illustrates his odes with myths or stories bearing more or less closely on the circumstances of his hero. Sometimes he celebrates the victor's ancestry, as in the famous sixth Olympian, in which the history of the Iamidæ is given; sometimes his city, as in the seventh Olympian, where he describes the birth-place of Diagoras, the island Rhodes; sometimes he dwells upon an incident in the hero's life, as when in the third Pythian the illness of Hiero suggests the legend of Asclepius and Cheiron; sometimes a recent event, like the eruption of Etna, alluded to in the first Pythian, gives colour to his ode; sometimes, as in the case of the last Pythian, where the story of Medusa is narrated, the legendary matter is introduced to specialize the nature of the contest. The victory itself is hardly touched upon: the allusions to ὄλβος, ἀρετή, εὐτυχία, though frequent and interwoven with the texture of the ode, are brief: the whole poetic fabric is so designed as to be appropriate to the occasion and yet independent of it. Therefore Pindar's odes have not perished with the memory of the events to which they owed their composition.

Pindar's peculiar treatment of the Epinikian ode may best be illustrated by analyzing the structure of one or two of his poems. But first take this translation of one of the shorter and simpler of the series—the twelfth Pythian:

“ To thee, fairest of earthly towns, I pray—
 Thou splendour-lover, throne of Proserpine,
 Piled o'er Girgenti's slopes, that feed alway
 Fat sheep!—with grace of gods and men incline,
 Great queen, to take this Pythian crown and own
 Midas; for he of all the Greeks, thy son,

Hath triumphed in the art which Pallas won,
Weaving of fierce Gorgonian throats the dolorous moan.

“She from the snake-encircled hideous head
Of maidens heard the wailful dirges flow,
What time the third of those fell Sisters bled
By Perseus’ hand, who brought the destined woe
To vexed Seriphos. He on Phorkys’ brood
Wrought ruin, and on Polydectes laid
Stern penance for his mother’s servitude,
And for her forceful wedlock, when he slew the maid

“Medusa. He by living gold, they say,
Was got on Danaë : but Pallas bore
Her hero through those toils, and wrought the lay
Of full-voiced flutes to mock the ghastly roar
Of those strong jaws of grim Euryale :
A goddess made and gave to men the flute,
The fountain-head of many a strain to be,
That ne’er at game or nation’s feast it might be mute,

“Sounding through subtle brass and voiceful reeds,
Which near the city of the Graces spring
By fair Cephisus, faithful to the needs
Of dancers. Lo ! there cometh no good thing
Apart from toils to mortals, though to-day
Heaven crown their deeds : yet shun we not the laws
Of Fate ; for times impend when chance withdraws
What most we hoped, and what we hoped not gives for aye.”

Here it will be seen that Pindar introduces his subject with a panegyric of Girgenti, his hero’s birthplace. Then he names Midas, and tells the kind of triumph he has gained. This leads him to the legend of Medusa. The whole is concluded with moral reflections on the influence of Fate over human destinies. The structure of the sixth Pythian is also very simple. “I build an indestructible treasure-house of praise for Xenocrates (lines 1-18), which Thrasybulus, his son, gained for him ; as Antilochus died for Nestor (19-43), so Thrasybulus has done what a son could do for his father (44-46) ; wise and fair is he in his youth ; his company is sweeter than the honeycomb” (47-54). One of the longest odes, the fourth

Pythian, is constructed thus : " Muse ! celebrate Arcesilaus (1-5). Cyrene, Arcesilaus' home ; its foundation and the oracle given to Battus (5-69). The tale of the Argonauts, ancestors of the founders of Thera and of Cyrene (69-262). Advice to Arcesilaus in the interest of Demophilus" (263-299), Here the victory at Pytho is but once briefly alluded to (l. 64). The whole ode consists of pedigree and political admonition, either directly administered at the end, or covertly conveyed through the example of Pelias. The sixth Olympian, which contains the pedigree of the Iamidæ, is framed on similar principles. The third Pythian introduces its mythology by a different method : " I wish I could restore Cheiron, the healer and the tutor of Asclepius, to life (1-7). The story of Coronis, her son Asclepius, and Hippolytus (7-58). Moral, to be content and submit to mortality (58-62). Yet would that Cheiron might return and heal Hiero (62-76) ! I will pray ; and do you, Hiero, remember that Heaven gives one blessing and two curses, and that not even Cadmus and Peleus were always fortunate (17-106). May I suit myself always to my fortune !" (107-115). The whole of this ode relates to Hiero's illness, and warns him of vicissitudes : even the episode of Coronis and Asclepius contains a covert warning against arrogance, while it gracefully alludes to Hiero's health.

The originality and splendour of Pindar are most noticeable in the openings of his odes—the Proemia, as they are technically called. It would appear that he possessed an inexhaustible storehouse of radiant imagery, from which to draw new thoughts for the commencement of his poems. In this region, which most poets find but barren, he displayed the fullest vigour and fertility of fancy. Sometimes, but rarely, the opening is simple, as in the second Olympian : " Hymns that rule the lyre ! what god, what hero, what man shall we make famous ?" Or the ninth Pythian : " I wish to proclaim, by help of the deep-girdled Graces, brazen-shielded Telesicrates, Pythian victor,"

&c. Rather more complex are the following : Nem. iv. "The joy of the feast is the best physician after toil ; but songs, the wise daughters of the Muses, soothe the victor with their touch : warm water does not so refresh and supple weary limbs as praise attended by the lyre ;" or again : Ol. xi. "There is a time when men have greatest need of winds ; there is when heaven's showers of rain, children of the cloud, are sorest sought for. But if a man achieves a victory with toil, then sweet-voiced hymns arise as the beginning of future fame," &c. &c. But soon we pass into a more gorgeous region. "As when with golden columns reared beneath the well-walled palace-porch we build a splendid hall, so will I build my song. At the beginning of the work we must make the portal radiant."* Or again : "No carver of statues am I, to fashion figures stationary on their pedestal ; but come, sweet song ! on every argosy and skiff set forth from Ægina to proclaim that Pytheas, Lampon's son, by strength of might is victor in Nemean games, upon whose chin and cheek you see not yet the tender mother of the vine-flower, summer's bloom."† Or again : "Hallowed bloom of youth, herald of Aphrodite's ambrosial pleasures, who, resting on the eyelids of maidens and of boys, bearest one aloft with gentle hands of violence, but another rudely !"‡ Or once again, in a still grander style :

"Listen ! for verily it is of beauty's queen, or of the Graces, that we turn the glebe, approaching the rocky centre of the deep-voiced earth : where for the blest Emmenidæ and stream-washed Acragas, yea, and for Zenocrates is built a treasure-house of Pythian hymns in the golden Apollonian vale. This, no rain of winter, driving on the wings of wind, the pitiless army of the rushing cloud, no hurricane, shall toss, storm-lashed with pebbles of the upturned beach, into the briny ocean caves : but in pure light its glorious face shall speak the victory that brings a common fame on thy sire, Thrasybulus, and thy race, remaining in the windings of Crisæan valleys."§

We have already seen how Pindar compares his odes to

* Ol. vi.

† Nem. v.

‡ Nem. viii.

§ Pyth. vi.

arrows, to sun-soaring eagles, to flowers of the Muses, to wine in golden goblets, to water, to a shrine which no years will fret away. Another strange figure * may be quoted from the third Nemean (line 76) : "I send to thee this honey mingled with white milk ; the dew of their mingling hangs around the bowl, a draught of song, flowing through the Æolian breath of flutes." It will be perceived that to what is called confusion of metaphors Pindar shows a lordly indifference. Swift and sudden lustre, the luminousness of a meteor, marks this monarch of lyric song. He grasps an image, gives it a form of bronze, irradiates it with the fire of flame or down-poured sunlight.

To do justice to Pindar's power of narrative by extracts and translations is impossible. No author suffers more by mutilation and by the attempt to express in another language and another rhythm what he has elaborately fashioned. Yet it may be allowed me to direct attention to the rapidity with which the burning of Coronis (Pyth. iii. 38), and the birth of Rhodes from the sea (Ol. vii. 54), are told in words the grandest, simplest, and most energetic that could be found. This is the birth of Iamos (Ol. vi. 39) :—

"Nor could she hide from Ægyptus the seed
 Divine : but he to Pytho, chewing care,
 Journeyed to gain for this great woe some rede ;
 She loosening her crimson girdle fair,
 And setting on the ground her silver jar,
 Beneath the darksome thicket bare a son,
 Within whose soul flamed godhead like a star ;
 And to her aid the golden-haired sent down
 Mild Eleithuia and the awful Fates,
 Who stood beside, while from the yearning gates

 "Of childbirth, with a brief and joyous pain,
 Came Iamos into the light, whom she therewith
 Sore-grieving left upon the grass : amain
 By gods' decree two bright-eyed serpents lithe

* Compare, too, Nem. vii. 11, 62, 77.

Tended, and with the harmless venom fed
 Of bees, the boy ; nor ceased they to provide
 Due nurture. But the king, what time he sped
 Homeward from rocky Pytho, to his side
 Called all his household, asking of the son
 Born of Evadne, for he said that none

“ But Phœbus was the sire, and he should be
 Chief for his prophecy ’mid mortal men,
 Nor should his children’s seed have end. Thus he
 Uttered the words oracular : and then
 They swore they had not heard or seen the child,
 Now five days old ; but he within the reed
 And thick-entangled woodland boskage wild,
 His limbs ’mid golden beams and purple brede
 Of gillyflowers deep-sunken, lay ; wherefore
 He by his mother’s wish for all time bore

“ That deathless name. But when he plucked the flower
 Of golden-wreathéd youth, he went and stood
 Midmost Alpheus, at the midnight hour,
 And called upon the ruler of the flood,
 His ancestor Poseidon, and the lord
 Of god-built Delos, praying that he might
 Rear up some race to greatness. Then the word
 Responsive of his sire upon the night
 Sounded :—‘ Arise, my son, go forth and fare
 Unto the land whereof all men shall share ! ’

“ So came they to the high untrodden mound
 Of Cronion ; and there a double meed
 Of prophecy on Iamos was bound,
 Both from the voice that knows no lie to heed
 Immortal words, and next, when Heracles,
 Bold in his counsels, unto Pisa came,
 Founding the festivals of sacred peace
 And mighty combats for his father’s fame,
 Then on the topmost altar of Jove’s hill,
 The seat of sooth oracular to fill.”

After so much praise of Pindar’s style it must be confessed that he has faults. One of these is notoriously tumidity—an overblown exaggeration of phrase. For example, when he wants to express that he cannot enlarge on the fame of Ægina, but

will relate as quickly as he can the achievements of Aristomenes which he has undertaken, he says :—" But I am not at leisure to consecrate the whole long tale to the lyre and delicate voice, lest satiety should come and cause annoy : but that which is before my feet shall go at running speed—thy affair, my boy—the latest of the noble deeds made winged by means of my art."* The imaginative force which enabled him to create epithets like Φιλάγλαος, παμπόρφυρος, and to put them exactly in their proper places, like blocks of gleaming alabaster or of glowing porphyry—for the architectural power over language is eminent in Pindar—the Titanic faculty of language which produced such phrases as ἐξ ἀδάμαντος ἢ σιδάρου κεχάλκευται μέλαιναν καρδίαν ψυχρᾷ φλογί, did also betray him into expressions as pompous and frigid as these—ποικιλοφόρμιγγος ἀοιδᾶς. . . . σχοινοτενεῖα τ' ἀοιδὰ διθυράμβων. These, poured forth by Pindar in the insolence of prodigality, when imitated by inferior poets, produced that inflated manner of lyrical diction which Aristophanes ridicules in Kinesias. The same may be said about his mixed metaphors, whereof the following are fair examples :—

δόξαν ἔχω τιν' ἐπὶ γλώσσα ἀκόνας λιγυρᾶς
 ἃ μ' ἐθέλοντα προσέλκει καλλιρόιοι πνοαῖς.—Ol. vi. 82.

Κῶπαν σχάσον ταχὺ δ' ἄγκυραν ἔρεισον χθονὶ
 πρῶραθε χοιράδος ἄλκαρ πέτρας
 ἐγκωμίων γὰρ ἄωτος ὕμνων
 ἐπ' ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὦ-ε μέλισσα θύνει λόγον.—Pyth. x. 51.

Nor are these the worst, perhaps, of the sort which might be chosen : for Pindar uses images like precious stones, setting them together in a mass, without caring to sort them, so long as they produce a gorgeous show. Apparent incoherences, involving difficulty to the reader, and producing a superficial

* Pyth. viii. 30.

effect of obscurity, constitute another class of his alleged faults—due partly to his allusive and elliptical style, partly to his sudden transitions, partly to the mixture of his images. Incapable of what is commonplace, too fiery to trudge, like Simonides, along the path of rhetorical development, infinitely more anxious to realise by audacity the thought that seizes him than to make it easy to his hearer, Pindar is obscure to all who are unwilling to assimilate their fancy to his own. La Harpe called the Divine Comedy *une amplification stupidement barbare*: what, if he had found occasion to speak the truth of his French mind, would he have said about the Odes of Pindar? Another difficulty, apart from these of verbal style and imagination, is derived from the fact that the mechanism of Pindar's poetry, carefully as it is planned, is no less carefully concealed. He seems to take delight in trying to solve the problem of how slight a suggestion can be made to introduce a lengthy narrative. The student is obliged to maintain his attention at the straining point if an ode of Pindar's, even after patient analysis, is to present more than a mass of confused thoughts and images to his mind. But when he has caught the poet's drift, how delicate is the machinery, how beautiful is the art, which governs this most sensitive fabric of linked melodies! What the hearers made of these odes—the athletes for whom they were written, the handsome youths praised in them, the rich men at whose tables they were chanted—remains an impenetrable mystery. Had the Greek race perceptions infinitely finer than ours? Or did the classic harmonies of Pindar sweep over their souls, ruffling the surface merely, but leaving the deeps untouched, as the soliloquies of *Hamlet* or the profound philosophy of *Troilus and Cressida* must have been lost upon the groundlings of Elizabeth's days, who caught with eagerness at the queen's poisoned goblet or the by-play of Sir Pandarus? That is a problem we cannot solve. All we know for certain

is, that even allowing for the currency of Pindar's language and for the familiarity of his audience with the circumstances under which his odes were composed, as well as with their mythological allusions, these poems must at all times have been more difficult to follow than Bach's fugue in G minor to a man who cannot play the organ.

CHAPTER VII.

GREEK TRAGEDY AND EURIPIDES.

THE Conditions for the development of a national Drama.—The Attic audience.—The Persian War.—Nemesis the cardinal idea of Greek Tragedy.—Traces of the doctrine of Nemesis in early Greek Poetry.—The fixed material of Greek Tragedy.—Athens in the age of Euripides.—Changes introduced by him in Dramatic Art.—The law of progress in all art.—Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides.—The treatment of *εὐψυχία* by Euripides.—Menoikeus.—The death of Eteocles and Polynices.—Polyxena.—Medea.—Hippolytus.—Electra and Orestes.—Injustice done to Euripides by recent critics.

CRITICS who are contented with referring the origin of the Greek drama to the mimetic instinct inherent in humanity are apt to neglect those circumstances which render it an almost unique phenomenon in literature. If the mimetic instinct were all that is requisite for the origination of a national drama, then we should find that every race at a certain period of its development produced both tragedy and comedy. This, however, is far from being the case. A certain rude mimesis, such as the acting of descriptive dances or the jesting of buffoons and mummers, is indeed common in all ages and nations. But there are only two races which can be said to have produced the drama as a fine art originally and independently of foreign influences. These are the Greeks and the Hindhus. With reference to the Hindhus, it is even questionable whether they would have composed plays so perfect as their famous "Sakountala" without contact with the Hellenes. All the products of the modern drama, whether tragic or comic, must be regarded

as the direct progeny of the Greek stage. The habit of play-acting, continued from Athens to Alexandria, and from Rome to Byzantium, never wholly expired. The "*Christus Patiens*," attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus, was an adaptation of the art of Euripides to Christian story; and the representation of "*Mysteries*" during the middle ages kept alive the dramatic tradition, until the discovery of classic literature and the revival of taste in modern Europe led to the great works of the English, Spanish, French, and subsequently of the German theatre.

Something more than the mere instinct of imitation, therefore, caused the Greeks to develop their drama. Like sculpture, like the epic, the drama was one of the artistic forms through which the genius of the Greek race expressed itself—by which, to use the language of philosophical mysticism, it fulfilled its destiny as a prime agent in the manifestation of the World-Spirit. In their realisation of that perfect work of art for which they seem to have been specially ordained, the drama was no less requisite than sculpture and architecture, than the epic, the ode, and the idyll.

Two conditions, both of which the Greeks enjoyed in full perfection at the moment of their first dramatic energy, seem to be requisite for the production of a great and thoroughly national drama. These are, first, an era of intense activity or a period succeeding immediately to one of excitement, by which the nation has been nobly agitated; secondly, a public worthy of the dramatist, spurring him on by its enthusiasm and intelligence to the creation of high works of art. A glance at the history of the drama in modern times will prove how necessary these conditions are. It was the gigantic effort which we English people made in our struggle with Rome and Spain, it was the rousing of our keenest thought and profoundest emotion by the Reformation, which prepared us for the Elizabethan drama, by far the greatest, next to the Greek, in literature. The nation lived in action, and delighted to see

great actions imitated. Races in repose or servitude, like the Hebrews under the Roman Empire, may, in their state of spiritual exaltation and by effort of pondering on the mysteries of God and man, give birth to new theosophies ; but it requires a free and active race, in which young and turbulent blood is flowing, to produce a drama. In England, again, at that time, there was a great public. All classes crowded to the theatres. London, in whose streets and squares martyrs had been burned, on whose quays the pioneers of the Atlantic and Pacific, after disputing the Indies with Spain, lounged and enjoyed their leisure, supplied an eager audience, delighting in the dreams of poets which recalled to mind the realities of their own lives, appreciating the passion of tragedy, enjoying the mirth of comic incident. The men who listened to *Othello* had both done and suffered largely ; their own experience was mirrored in the scenes of blood and struggle set before them. These two things, therefore—the awakening of the whole English nation to activity, and the presence of a free and haughty audience—made our drama great.

In the Spanish drama only one of the requisite conditions was fulfilled—activity. Before they began to write plays the Spaniards had expelled the Moors, discovered the New World, and raised themselves to the first place among European nations. But there was not the same free audience in Spain as in England. Papal despotism and the tyranny of the Court checked and coerced the drama, so that, with all its richness and imaginative splendour, the Spanish theatre is inferior to the English. The French drama suffered still more from the same kind of restriction. Subject to the canons of scholastic pedants, tied down to an imitation of the antique, made to reflect the manners and sentiments of a highly artificial Court, animated by the sympathies of no large national audience, the French playwrights became courtiers, artists obedient to the pleasures of a king—not, like the dramatists of Greece and England, the

prophets of the people, the leaders of a chorus triumphant and rejoicing in its mighty deeds.

Italy has no real theatre. In Italy there has been no stirring of a national, united spirit ; no supreme and central audience ; no sudden consciousness of innate force and freedom in the sovereign people. The requisite conditions have always failed. The German drama, both by its successes and shortcomings, illustrates the same position. Such greatness as it achieved in Goethe and Schiller it owed to the fermentation of German nationality, to the so-called period of "storm and stress" which electrified the intellects of Germany and made the Germans eager to assert their manhood among nations. But listen to Goethe complaining that there was no public to receive his works ; study the petty cabals of Weimar ; estimate the imitative and laborious spirit of German art ; and it is clear why Germany produced but scattered and imperfect results in the drama.

The examples of England, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, all tend to prove that for the creation of a drama it is necessary that the condition of national activity should be combined with the condition of a national audience—not an audience of courtiers, or critics, or learned persons. In Greece, both of these conditions were united in unrivalled and absolute perfection. While in England, during the Elizabethan period, the public which crowded our theatres were uncultivated, and formed but a small portion of the free nation they represented—in Athens the whole people, collectively and in a body, witnessed the dramatic shows provided for them in the theatre of Bacchus. That theatre had space for 30,000 spectators, so that the total male population of Athens could enter it, and at the same moment attend to the tragedies or comedies of rival playwrights.* The same set of men, when assembled in the

* See Leake's *Topography of Athens*, vol. i. p. 521.

Pnyx, constituted the national assembly ; and in that capacity made laws, voted supplies, declared wars, ratified alliances, ruled the affairs of dependent cities. In a word, they were Athens. Every man among them—by intercourse with the greatest spirits of the Greek world in the Agora and porches of the wrestling-grounds, by contemplation of the sculptures of Pheidias, by familiarity with Eleusinian processions, by participation in solemn sacrifices and choric dances, by listening to the recitations of Homer, by attendance on the lectures of the sophists, by debates in the Ecclesia, by pleadings in the law-courts—had been multifariously educated and rendered capable of appreciating the subtleties of rhetoric and argument, as well as of comprehending the æsthetical beauty with which a Greek play was enriched. It is easy to imagine the influence which this potent, multitudinous, and highly cultivated audience must have exercised over the dramatists, and what an impulse it must have communicated to their genius. In England the playwright and the actor were both looked down upon with pity or contempt ; they wrote and acted for money in private speculations, and in rivalry with several petty theatres. In Athens the tragedian was honoured. Sophocles was elected a general with Pericles, and a member of the provisional government after the dissolution of the old democracy. The actor, too, was respected. The State itself defrayed the expenses of the drama, and no ignoble competition was possible between tragedian and tragedian, since all exhibited their plays to the same audience, in the same sacred theatre, and all were judged by the same judges.

The critical condition of the Greek people itself at the epoch of the drama is worth minute consideration. During the two previous centuries, the whole of Hellas had received a long and careful education : at the conclusion came the terrible convulsion of the Persian war. After the decay of the old monarchies, the Greek states seethed for years in the process

of dissolution and reconstruction. The colonies had been founded. The aristocratic families had striven with the mob in every city; and from one or the other power at times tyrants had risen to control both parties and oppress the commonwealth. Out of these political disturbances there gradually arose a sense of law, a desire for established constitutions. There emerged at last the prospect of political and social stability. Meanwhile, in all departments of art and literature, the Greeks had been developing their genius. Lyrical, satirical, and elegiac poetry had been carried to perfection. The Gnostic poets and the Seven Sages had crystallized morality in apophthegms. Philosophy had taken root in the colonies. Sculpture had almost reached its highest point. The Greek games, practised through nearly three hundred years, had created a sense of national unity. It seemed as if all the acquirements and achievements of the race had been spread abroad to form a solid and substantial base for some most comprehensive superstructure. Then, while Hellas was at this point of magnificent but still incomplete development, there followed, first, the expulsion of the Peisistratids from Athens, which aroused the spirit of that mighty nation, and then the invasion of Xerxes, which electrified the whole Greek world. It was this that inflamed the genius of Greece; this transformed the race of thinkers, poets, artists, statesmen, into a race of heroes, actors in the noblest sense of the word. The struggle with Persia, too, gave to Athens her right place. Assuming the hegemony of Hellas, to which she was foredestined by her spiritual superiority, she flashed in the supreme moment which followed the battle of Salamis into the full consciousness of her own greatness. It was now, when the Persian war had made the Greeks a nation of soldiers, and had placed the crown on Athens, that the drama—that form of art which combines all kinds of poetry in one, which subordinates sculpture, painting, architecture, music, dancing,

to its own use, and renders all arts subservient to the one end of action—appeared in its colossal majesty upon the Attic stage.

At this point of history the drama was a necessary product. The forces which had given birth to all the other forms of art were still exuberant and unexhausted, needing their completion. At the same time, nothing but the impassioned presentation of humanity in action could possibly have satisfied the men who had themselves enacted on the plains and straits of Attica the greatest and most artistic drama of real history. It was one of the chief actors of Marathon and Salamis who composed the *Prometheus*, and personated his own hero on the stage.

If we proceed to analyse the cardinal idea of Greek tragedy, we shall again observe the close connection which exists between the drama and the circumstances of the people at the time of its production. Schlegel, in his *Lectures on the Drama*, defines the prevailing idea of Greek tragedy to be the sense of an oppressive destiny—a fate against which the will of man blindly and vainly dashes. This conception of hereditary destiny seems to be strongly illustrated by many plays. Orestes, Œdipus, Antigone are unable to escape their doom. Beautiful human heroism and exquisite innocence are alike sacrificed to the fatality attending an accursed house. Yet Schlegel has not gone far enough in his analysis. He has not seen that this inflexible fate is set in motion by a superior and anterior power, that it operates in the service of offended justice. When Œdipus slays his father, he does so in contempt of oracular warnings. Orestes, haunted by the Furies, has a mother's blood upon his hands, and unexpiated crimes of father and of grandsire to atone for. Antigone, the best of daughters and most loving of sisters, dies miserably, not dogged by Fate, but having of her own freewill exposed her life in obedience to the pure laws of the heart. It is impossible to suppose that a Greek would have been satisfied

with the bald fate-theory of Schlegel. Not Fate, but Nemesis, was the ruling notion in Greek tragedy. A profound sense of the Divine government of the world, of a righteous power punishing pride and vice, pursuing the children of the guilty to the tenth generation, but showing mercy to the contrite—in short, a mysterious and almost Jewish ideal of offended Holiness, pervades the whole work of the tragedians. This religious conception had gradually defined itself in the consciousness of the Greek race. Homer in both his epics presents us with the spectacle of crime punished. It is the sin of Paris and the obstinacy of the Trojan princes which lead to the fall of Troy. It is the insolence of the suitors in the *Odyssey* which brings them to their death. The Cyclical poets seem to have dwelt on the same theme. The storm which fell on the Achaian fleet, dispersing or drowning the heroes, was a 'punishment for their impiety and pride during the sack of Troy. The madness of Ajax followed his violence upon Cassandra. When conscious morality begins in Greece the idea is at once made prominent. Hesiod continually insists on justice, whose law no man may violate unpunished. The Gnostic poets show how guilt, if unavenged at the moment, brings calamity upon the offspring of the evil-doer. This notion of an inheritance of crime is particularly noticeable, since it tinged the whole tragedy of the Greeks. Solon, again, in his dialogue with Cræsus, develops another aspect of the same idea. With him the Deity is jealous of all towering greatness, of all insolent prosperity; his Nemesis punishes the pride of wealth and the lust of life. Some of the most prominent personages of Greek tragedy—Creon, Œdipus, Theseus, Agamemnon—illustrate this phase of the idea. In the sayings of the Seven Sages we trace another shade of the conception. All of them insist on moderation, modesty, the right proportion, the due mean. The lyrists take up a somewhat different position. The vicissitudes of life, both inde-

pendent of and connected with personal guilt, fascinate their imagination. They have a deep and awful sense of sudden catastrophes. Pindar rises to a loftier level : his odes are pervaded by reverence for a holy Power, before whom the insolent are forced to bow, by whom the humble are protected, and the good rewarded.

Such are the traces of a doctrine of Nemesis to be found in all the literature of the pre-dramatic period. That very event which determined the sudden splendour of the drama, gave a sublime and terrific sanction to the already existing morality. The Persian war exhibited the downfall of a haughty and insolent race, cut off in all its pomp and power. Before the eyes of the men who witnessed the calamities of Œdipus and Agamemnon on the stage, the glory of godless Asia had vanished like a dream. Thus the idea of Nemesis quelling the insolent and smiting the unholy was realised in actual history ; and to add to the impression produced on Greek imagination by the destruction of the Persian hosts, Pheidias carved his statue of Nemesis to be a monument in enduring marble of the national morality. Æschylus erected an even more majestic monument to the same principle in his tragedies.*

Nemesis is the fundamental idea of the Greek drama. It appears strongest in Æschylus, as a prophetic and awful law, mysteriously felt and terribly revealed. Sophocles uses it to point the deep moralities which govern human life. In Euripides it degenerates into something more akin to a sense of vicissitudes ; it becomes more sentimental—less a religious or moral principle than a phenomenon inspiring fear and pity. This sequence appears to be necessary in the growth and expansion of a primitive idea. Rugged and superstitious at

* The terrific lessons of the Persian war seem to have quickened in the Greeks a spiritual sense beyond what was natural to their genius, and from the influence of which they speedily recovered.

first, it is next harmonised and humanised, and ends at last in being merely artistic.

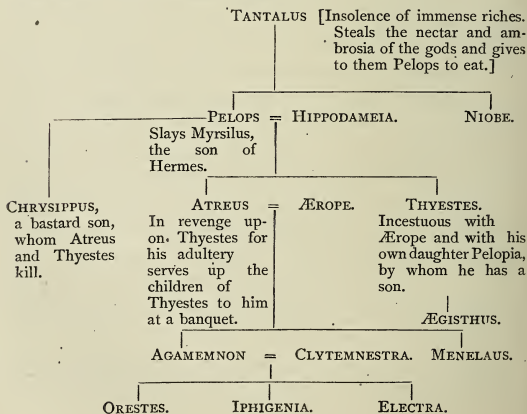
In Æschylus the fundamental moral law of Nemesis, as a part of the Divine government of the world, is set forth in three distinct manifestations.* We find it expressed mythologically, as abstract and ideal, in the *Prometheus*. The offence of Prometheus against Zeus, though unselfish and generous, must be expiated by suffering; the rebellious demigod must be brought at last to merge his will in that of Zeus, to bind his brows with the willow of submission, and to place upon his finger the iron ring of necessity. We find it expressed typically, as still ideal and almost superhuman, in the *Oresteia*. Here a whole family is vitiated by the offence of their first ancestor. The hereditary curse is renewed and fortified from generation to generation, by the sins of the children, until at last a reconciliation is effected between the purifying deities and the infernal powers of vengeance. In the *Persæ* the same law is exhibited as a fact of contemporary history. It is no longer a matter of mythology, as in the *Prometheus*, or a matter of heroic legend, as in the *Oresteia*, but a matter of actual experience, that the godless man should suffer and involve the innocent in his disaster. Thus the law of Nemesis is displayed as an eternal verity in the *Prometheus*; and in the *Oresteia* it is actualised and humanised within the region of heroic legend; in the *Persæ* it is used for the explanation of everyday events. The pedigree of inherited crime and vengeance, as explained in the choruses of the *Oresteia*, and as illustrated by the whole history of the Tantalidæ, is this. The pride of wealth in the first instance swells the heart, and inclines its possessor to ungodly thoughts. This leads to impiety (τὸ δυσσεβές), and in the energetic language of the *Agamemnon* † the arrogant man kicks with

* For a detailed critique of Æschylus, see my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets*, chap. vi.

† Line 375; compare *Choeph.* 631, *Eum.* 510-514.

his heel against the altar of Justice. A state of presumptuous insolence (*ὕβρις*) is the result of the original unholiness. And now the man, who has been corrupted in his soul, is ready for the commission of some signal crime. Até, or a blindness of the reason, which prevents him from foreseeing the consequences of his acts, is the child of this presumption. Inspired by Até, he sheds the blood of his brother, or defiles his sister's bed ;* and from this moment the seed is sown, which will spring up and breed fresh mischief for each successive generation. After the spilling of blood the affair passes into the hands of the Erinnyes, whose business it is to beset the house of the guilty doer. They form the bloody revel, which though glutted with gore, refuse to quit the palace of Atreus. They leap upon it from above, and rack it like a tempest. Yet from their power there is escape. The curse of the house works ; but it works

* This pedigree of the House of Tantalus—a family Upas-tree—illustrates the descent of crime from generation to generation :



only through the impure. Should a man arise capable of seeing rightly and living purely, he may work off the curse and become free. Such a man was Orestes. The leading thought in this system of morality is that pride begets impiety, impiety produces an insolent habit of mind, which culminates in blindness; the fruit of this blindness is crime, breeding crime from sire to son. It is only when the righteous man appears, who performs an act of retributive justice, in obedience to divine mandates, and without the indulgence of any selfish passion, that the curse is stayed. Such is a crude sketch of the Æschylean theory of Nemesis, as set forth in the great Trilogy. To Æschylus, the presentation of the moral law conceived by him is of more importance than the exhibition of the characters of men controlled by it. Such is not the case with Sophocles. He fixes our attention upon the ἀμαρτία, or error of the guilty man, interests us in the qualities by which he was betrayed into sin, and makes us feel that suffering is the inevitable consequence of arrogant or wilful acts. The weakness of the offender is more prominent in Sophocles than the vengeance of the outraged deity. Thus, although there is the sternest religious background to all the tragedies of Sophocles, our attention is always fixed upon the humanity of his heroes. The house of Labdacus is involved in hereditary guilt. Laius, despising an oracle, begets a son by Jocasta, and is slain by that son. Œdipus, in his youthful recklessness, careless of oracular warnings, kills his father and weds his mother. Jocasta, through her levity and impiety, is hurried into marriage with the murderer of her husband, who is also her own son. All this αἰθαλία, or headstrong wilfulness, is punished by the descent of a fearful plague on Thebes; and Œdipus, whose heat of temper and self-reliance are his only serious crime, is overpowered by the abyss of misery into which these faults have plunged his people and his family. The utter prostration of Œdipus—when his eyes have been opened to the

tissue of horrors he has woven round himself, his mother, his nation, and his children—is the first step in his moral discipline. He abdicates in favour of the insolent Creon, and goes forth to wander, an abhorred and helpless blind man, on the face of the earth. When, at the conclusion of his Pariah life, the citizens of Colonus refuse him harbourage, he only cries: "My deeds were rather sufferings than crimes." His old heroic haughtiness and headstrong will are tempered to a noble abhorrence of all baseness, to a fiery indignation. He has been purged and lessoned to humility before the throne of Zeus. Therefore, in return for his self-annihilation, the gods at last receive him to their company, and constitute him a blessed Dæmon in the place of his disgrace.* It was the highest triumph of tragic art to exhibit that new phase in the character of Œdipus, which marks the conclusion of the *Tyrannus*, and is sustained in the *Coloneus*. In both of these

* The scenery of the *Œdipus at Colonus* is admirably suited to this conclusion of a tragic tale. During the course of his wanderings the discrowned king has learned from the oracle that he is destined to end his days within the precincts of the Semnai Theai—the august goddesses—the Eumenides. It is therefore with a firm presentiment of coming death that he discovers that his blind feet, led by Antigone, have rested in the grove of the Furies at Colonus. The place is fair. There are here no Æschylean Harpy-Gorgons with blood-shot eyes and twining vipers: but the meadows are dewy with crocus-flowers and narcissus; in the thickets of olive and laurel nightingales keep singing; and the sound of rivulets spreads coolness in the midst of summer's heat. The whole grove is hushed, and very fresh and wild. A solemn stillness broods there, for the feet of the profane keep far away, and none may tread the valley-lawns but those who have been purified. The ransomed of the Lord walk there. This solemnity of peace pervades the whole play, forming, to borrow a phrase from painting, the silver-grey harmony of the picture. There is a peculiar depth of meaning in thus bringing Œdipus to die among the unshowered meadows of those Dread Ladies, whom in his troubled life he found so terrible, but whom in his sublime passage from the world he is to greet resignedly. The thought of death, calm but austere, tempers every scene: we are in the presence of one whose life is ended, who is about to merge the fever of existence in the tranquillity beyond.

plays, Œdipus is the same man : but circumstances have so wrought upon his temper as to produce a great change. Still, the change is only commensurate with the force of the circumstances. We comprehend it, while at the same time we are forced to marvel at the profound skill of the poet, who, in the first tragedy, has presented to our eyes the hot-tempered king reduced to abject humiliation, and in the second has shown us the same man dignified, and purified by the dealings of the heavy hand of God. Set aside by his calamity, and severed from the common lot of men, Œdipus has submitted to the divine will and has communed with unseen powers. He is therefore now environed with a treble mystery—with the mystery of his awful past,—the mystery of his god-conducted present,—the mystery of his august future. It was by such masterly delineation of character that Sophocles threw the old Æschylean dogma of Nemesis into the background, and moralised his tragedy without sacrificing an iota of its religious force. Aristotle, speaking of the highest tragic art, says that its object is to represent an ἥθος, a permanent habit of moral temper. Careless or bad art allows impossible incongruities in the delineation of character, whereas the true poet maintains identity throughout. If this be so, Sophocles deserves the title of ἡθικώτατος in the very highest sense. As a further illustration of the divergence of Sophocles from the Æschylean dogma of Nemesis, it is worth while to mention the *Antigone*. This play takes us beyond the region of hereditary guilt into the sphere of moral casuistry ; its tragic interest depends not upon the evolution of an ancestral curse, although Antigone is incidentally involved in the crime of her brothers ; but upon the conflict of duties in a single heart. Antigone, while obeying the law of her conscience, is disobeying the command of her sovereign. She acted rightly ; yet her offence was sufficient to cause her legal death, and this death she chose with open eyes. It is in the person of Creon that the old moral of Nemesis is

drawn. Like Œdipus, he treats the warnings of Teiresias with scorn, and persists in his criminal persecution of the dead Polyneices. Shaken at last by the seer's vaticinations, he rescinds his orders, but too late. Antigone has hanged herself in prison; Hæmon curses his father, and stabs himself upon her corpse; Eurydice, maddened with grief, puts an end to her own life; and thus the house of the tyrant is left unto him desolate. It is quite impossible by any phrases of mere criticism to express the admiration which every student of Sophocles must feel for the profundity of his design, for the unity of his art, and for the firmness with which he has combined the essential religious doctrines of Greek tragedy with his own ethical philosophy. In passing to Euripides we feel how much we have lost. The religious foundation has been broken up; the clear intuitive morality of Sophocles has been exchanged for sophistry; and, as a consequence, his tragedies can never boast of unity beyond the region of æsthetical composition. In the delineation of character he wavers; not because he could not conceive of a well-sustained type, since Medea, Hippolytus, and many other of his studies have a grand subjective identity; but because, apparently through levity, he was more interested in the creation of plots and situations than in the exhibition of the truly tragic *ἥθος*. The praise bestowed on him by Aristotle proves that his contemporaries had recognised this source of both his weakness and his strength.

In considering the work done by the three great tragic authors, we must not forget that the Greek dramatists adhered to a fixed body of legends; the tales of the House of Atreus, of Troy, of the family of Laius at Thebes, of Heracles, of Jason, and of Theseus, formed the staple of the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. This fact helps to account for the early decline of the Greek drama. It was impossible for the successors of Æschylus and Sophocles to surpass them in the heroic treatment of the same mythical motives. Yet custom

and tradition, the religious antecedents of tragedy, the cumbersome apparatus of mask and buskin and Bacchic robe, the conventional Chorus, the vast size of the theatre, the whole form, in fact, of Greek dramatic art, rendered a transition from the heroic to the romantic tragedy impossible. Those fixed legends which Æschylus had used as the framework for his religious philosophy of Nemesis and Até, from which Sophocles had drawn deep lessons of morality, had to be employed by Euripides as best he might. On their firmly traced, inflexible outlines he embroidered his own work of pathos and imagination, losing sight of the divine element, blurring morality, but producing a world of fanciful yet living shapes of sentiment and thought and passion.

In order to comprehend the position of Euripides in relation to his predecessors, we must consider the changes which had taken place in Athens between the period of the Persian war and that in which he flourished. All the mutations of Greek history were accomplished with celerity; but in this space of less than half a century the rate of progress was nothing less than marvellous.* Some of the men of Marathon yet remained

* The evolution of the Attic drama through its three great tragedians was accomplished with a rapidity which is quite miraculous. Æschylus gained his first prize in 484 B.C., Sophocles his first in 468 B.C., Euripides his first in 441 B.C. The *Medea* of Euripides, a play which exhibits all the innovations of its author, appeared in 431 B.C. Therefore a period of fifty-three years sufficed for the complete development of the greatest work of art the world has ever witnessed. The history of our own stage offers a parallel to this extraordinary rapidity of growth. Marlowe produced his *Tamburlaine* in 1590, Ford his *Lover's Melancholy* in 1628: between these two dates—that is to say, within the compass of thirty-eight years—were composed all the plays of Marlowe, Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, Webster, Heywood, Decker, Marston, Chapman, Middleton, and others whom it would be tedious to mention. Halliwell's *Dictionary of Old English Plays* contains 280 closely-printed pages; yet very few of the pieces he enumerates are subsequent to what we call Elizabethan. But, though our drama, in respect of fertility, offers a parallel to that of Athens, we can show no three poets of paramount genius corre-

when Aristophanes was writing, both to point his moral against Euripides, and also to prove by contrast with the generation that had grown up since, how impossible it was for the poet of the present to vie with the Æschylus of the past. In the first place, Athens had become the centre of progressive thought. Teachers of rhetoric and reasoning made her wrestling-grounds and gardens the scene of their disputes and lectures. The arts of eloquence were studied by the youth who in a previous age had been contented with Homer. At Athens, Anaxagoras had questioned the divinity of Helios, and had asserted Reason to be the moving force of the universe. Sophists who taught the arts of life for money, and philosophers who subjected morals to ingenious analysis, and explained away on scientific principles the ancient myths of Greek nature-worship, combined to disturb ethical and religious traditions. A more solid, because more reasoned, morality was springing up perhaps. A purer monotheism was being inculcated. But meanwhile the old Hellenic customs and the fabric of mythic theology were undermined. It could not be but that the poet of the day should participate in these changes. In the second place, the Athenian populace had grown to be supreme in two departments—the high parliament of State and the law-courts. Every Athenian was now far more than formerly an orator or judge of orators, an advocate or judge of advocates. Two passions possessed the popular mind : the passion for the Assembly with its stormy debate and pompous declamation ; the passion for the Dikastery with its personal interests, its problems of casuistical law, its momentous tragedies of private

sponding to Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, each of whom would have been sufficient by himself to mark a century in the growth of the genius of his nation. Between Æschylus and Sophocles there is a wide chasm in religion, politics, and art ; between Sophocles and Euripides, again, there is a chasm in religion, politics, art, and philosophy. Yet Sophocles, after superseding Æschylus, lived to put on mourning for the death of Euripides.

life, its studied eloquence. Talking and listening were the double function of an Athenian citizen. To speak well on every subject, so as to gain causes in the courts, and to persuade the people in the Pnyx; to criticise speeches with acumen, so as not to be deluded by specious arguments: these were the prime accomplishments of an Athenian youth of promise. It is obvious that a very peculiar audience was thus formed for the tragedian—an audience greedy of intellectual subtleties, of pathetic situations, of splendid oratory, of clever reasoning—an audience more appreciative of the striking than the true, of the novel than the natural. In the third place, the Athenians had waxed delicate and wanton since the Persian war. When *Æschylus* began to write, the peril of utter ruin hung like a stone of *Tantalus* over *Hellas*. That removed, the Greeks breathed freely. The Athenians, growing in wealth and power, neglected the old moderation of their ancestors. Youths who in earlier days would have fared hardly, now drove their chariots, backed their fighting-cocks, and followed their own sweet will. Aristotle quaintly enough observes, that the flute had become fashionable after the expulsion of the Persians. The poet of the day could no longer be austere like *Æschylus* or sedate like *Sophocles*. In all these changes *Euripides* partook. The pupil in rhetoric of *Prodicus*, in philosophy of *Anaxagoras* and *Heraclitus*, a book-collector, a student of painting, the friend of *Socrates*, cultivated in all innovations of morality and creed, *Euripides* belonged essentially to his own day. As far as a tragic dramatist can be the mouthpiece of his age, *Euripides* was the mouthpiece of Athenian decline. For this reason, because he so exactly expressed the feelings and opinions of his time, which feelings and opinions produced a permanent national habit of mind, *Euripides* became the darling of posterity. *Æschylus* was the Titanic product of a bygone period; *Sophocles* displayed the pure and perfect ideal; but *Euripides* was the artist who, without

improving on the spirit of his age, gave it a true and adequate expression. The only wonder is that during his lifetime Euripides was not more popular at Athens. His comparative neglect proves him to have been somewhat in advance of his century, and justifies Aristophanes in the reproach that he anticipated the Athenians in the break-up of their forms of thought.

At this point we may consider the condition of the Tragic Art when Euripides took it up as the business of his life. Though tragedy, as formed by Æschylus, represented one true and important aspect of Greek thought—the religious, yet it could never have been adequate to the life of the whole nation in the same degree as the many-sided drama of Shakspeare, for example, was to that of our Elizabethan ancestors. Its regularity and solemnity tended to make it an ideal work of art. It might arouse the religious feeling, the national pride, the enthusiasm for a legendary past, which were so powerful among the Athenians of the Marathonian epoch. But it could not have had much attraction for the Athenians of the Syracusan expedition. As men subject to the divine rule, indeed, it had a message fraught with meaning for them; but as Athenians of to-day it did not touch them. We can well believe that this lofty, ceremonious art fatigued a large portion of the Attic audience. After having listened to some seventy plays of Æschylus and fifty of Sophocles, not to mention Phrynichus and Choerilus, and scores of minor dramatists, all teaching the same religious morality, and all obeying the same æsthetic principles, we can conceive that a merry Greek began to long for novelty. It must have required the supreme genius of a Sophocles to sustain the attention of the audience at its ancient altitude. In the hands of inferior poets, the tragic common-places must have appeared insipid. Some change seemed absolutely necessary. Euripides, a poet of very distinguished originality, saw that he must adapt his dramatic

style to the new requirements of his audience, and give them what they liked, even though it were not good for them. The sophistic arguments, the strained situations, the law-court pleadings, the pathetic touches, the meretricious lyrics, the philosophical explanations, the sententious epigrams, the theatrical effects, which mar his tragedies, were deliberate innovations on the old pure style. Euripides had determined to bring tragedy home to the sympathies of the spectators. All the peculiarities of his art flow from this one aim. Whether he did not pursue this aim on a false method, whether he might not have aroused the sympathies of his audience without debasing tragedy, remains a fit matter for debate.

Entirely to eliminate the idea of Nemesis, which gave its character to Greek tragedy, was what Euripides, had he been so inclined, could hardly have succeeded in effecting. Though he never impresses on our minds the dogma of an avenging deity, like Æschylus, or of an inevitable law, like Sophocles, he makes us feel the chance and change of human life, the helplessness of man, the stormy sea of passions, sorrows, and vicissitudes on which the soul is tossed. Conventional phrases about moderation in all things, retributive justice, and the like, are used to keep up the old tragic form. In this way he brought tragedy down to the level of real life, wherein we do not trace the visible finger of Providence, but where all seems at least confusion to the natural eye. Euripides, no more than Shakspeare, sought to be a prophet or interpreter of the divine operations. In the same spirit he treated his materials with freedom. Adhering conventionally, and as a form of art, to the mythical legends of Hellas—that charmed circle beyond which the tragic muse had never strayed—he adapted them to his own purposes. He gave new characters to the principal heroes,* mixed up legendary incidents with trivial domestic

* Very notable in this respect is his consistent degradation of Ulysses.

scenes, lowered the language of demigods to current Greek talk, hazarded occasional scepticism, and introduced familiar phrases into ceremonious debates. The sacred character of the myths disappeared ; Euripides used them as so many masses of entertaining folklore and fiction, fit for tragic handling. When we hear Achilles and Orestes talking like Athenian citizens, wrangling, perorating, subtilizing, seeking victory in strife of words, trifling with questions of profoundest import, and settling moral problems by verbal quibbles, we understand the remark of Sophocles that he had painted men as they ought to be, Euripides as they are. Medea and Alcestis are not the mythical Medea or the legendary queen of Phæræ, but an injured wife, and a devoted wife, just such as Shakspeare or Balzac might have depicted. But unfortunately for this attempt to make Greek tragedy more real and living, more representative of the actual world, the cothurnus, the mask, the Chorus, the thymelé, the gigantic stage, remained. All the cumbrous paraphernalia of the Æschylean theatre environed the men and women of Euripides, who cut but a poor figure in the garb of demigods. In trying to adapt the mould of Greek tragedy to real life, Euripides overpassed the limits of possibility. The mould snapped in his hands. Therefore he is better to read than he could have been in scenic representation.

The same inevitable divergence from the Æschylean system is observable in every department of the tragedy of Euripides. While Sophocles had diminished the direct interposition of mysterious agencies, so frequently invoked by Æschylus, and had interested his audience in human character controlled and tempered by an unseen will of God, Euripides went further. With him the affairs of life are no longer based upon a firm foundation of Divine law, but gods intervene mechanically and freakishly, like the magicians in Ariosto or Tasso.* Their agency is valu-

* Exception must be made in favour of the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchæ*,

able, not as determining the moral conduct of the personages, but as an exhibition of supernatural power which brings about a sudden revolution of events. Independently of their miraculous activity, the human agents display all varieties of character: every shade of virtue and vice is delicately portrayed; pathetic scenes are multiplied; the tendernesses of domestic life are brought prominently forward; mixed motives and conflicting passions are skilfully analyzed. Consequently the plays of Euripides are more rich in stirring incidents than those of his predecessors. What we lose in gravity and unity is made up for by versatility. Euripides, to use a modern phrase, is more sensational than either Æschylus or Sophocles. Aristotle called him *τραγικώτατος*, by which he probably meant that he was most profuse of touching and exciting scenes.

The same tendencies strike us in the more formal department of the tragic art. Here as elsewhere Euripides moves a step beyond Sophocles, breaking the perfection of poetic harmony for the sake of novelty and effect. Euripides condescended to stage tricks. It is well known how Aristophanes laughed at him for the presentation of shabby-genteel princes and monarchs out-at-elbow. Having no deep tragic destiny for the groundwork of his drama, he sought to touch the spectators by royalty in ruins and wealth reduced to beggary. The gorgeous scenic shows in which Æschylus had delighted, but which he had invariably subordinated to his subject, and which Sophocles with the tact of a supreme master in beauty had managed to dispense with, were lavished by Euripides. One play of his, the *Troades*, has absolutely no plot. Such attraction as it possesses, it owes to the rapid succession of pathetic situations and splendid scenes, the whole closing with the burning of the towers of Troy.

By curtailing the function of the Chorus, Euripides separated where the whole action of the play and the conduct of the persons are determined by the influences of Aphrodite and Dionysus.

from the action of the drama that element which in Æschylus had been chiefly useful for the inculcation of the moral of the play. On the other hand, by expanding the function of the Messenger he was able to indulge his faculty for brilliant description. It has been well said, that the ear and not the eye was the chosen vehicle of pathos to the Greeks. This remark is fully justified by the narrative passages in the plays of Euripides—passages of poetry unsurpassed for radiance, swiftness, strength, pictorial effect. The account of the Bacchic revels among the mountains of Cithæron, and of the death of Pentheus in the *Bacchæ*, that of the death of Glauké in *Medea*, and of Hippolytus in the play that bears his name, that of the sacrifice of Polyxena in the *Hecuba*, and many others, prove with what consummate skill the third of the great tragic poets seized upon a field within the legitimate province of his art, as yet but imperfectly occupied by his predecessors.

Another novelty was the use of the prologue. Here, again, Euripides expanded the already existing elements in Greek tragedy beyond their power of enduring the strain he put upon them. In their drama the Greek poets did not aim at surprise; the spectators were expected to be familiar beforehand with the subject of the play. But when the plot became more complicated, and the incidents more varied under the hands of Euripides, a prologue was the natural expedient, in perfect harmony with the stationary character of Greek tragedy, for placing the audience at the point of view intended by the poets.

In all these changes it will be evident that Euripides, wisely or unwisely, obtained originality by carrying his art beyond the point which it had reached under his predecessors. Using a simile, we might compare the drama of Æschylus to the sublime but rugged architecture which is called Norman, that of Sophocles to the most refined and perfect pointed style, that of

Euripides to a highly decorated—florid and flamboyant—manner. Æschylus aimed at durability of structure, at singleness and grandeur of effect. Sophocles added the utmost elegance and finish. Euripides neglected force of construction and unity of design for ornament and brilliancy of effect. But he added something of his own, something infinitely precious and enduringly attractive. The fault of his style consisted in a too exclusive attention to the parts.

The object of the foregoing remarks has been to show how and to what extent Euripides departed from the form and essence of Greek tragedy. It may sound paradoxical now to assert that it was a merit in him rather than a defect to have sacrificed the unity of art to the development of subordinate beauties. Yet it seems to me that in no other way could the successor of Æschylus and Sophocles have made himself the true exponent of his age, have expanded to the full the faculties still latent in Greek tragedy, or have failed to “affect the fame of an imitator.” The law of inevitable progression in art, from the severe and animated embodiment of an idea to the conscious elaboration of merely æsthetic motives and brilliant episodes, has hitherto been neglected by the critics and historians of poetry. They do not observe that the first impulse in a people toward creativeness is some deep and serious emotion, some fixed point of religious enthusiasm or national pride. To give adequate form to this taxes the energies of the first generation of artists, and raises their poetic faculty, by the admixture of prophetic inspiration, to the highest pitch. After the original passion for the ideas to be embodied in art has somewhat subsided, but before the glow and fire of enthusiasm have faded out, there comes a second period, when art is studied more for art’s sake, but when the generative potency of the earlier poets is by no means exhausted. For a moment the artist at this juncture is priest, prophet, hierophant, and charmer, all in one. More conscious of the laws of beauty than his predecessors, he

makes some sacrifice of the idea to meet the requirements of pure art ; but he never forgets that beauty by itself is insufficient to a great and perfect work, nor has he lost his interest in the cardinal conceptions which vitalise the most majestic poetry. During the first and second phases which I have indicated, the genius of a nation throws out a number of masterpieces—some of them rough-hewn and Cyclopean, others perfect in their combination of the strength of thought with grace and elevated beauty. But the mine of ideas is exhausted. The national taste has been educated. Conceptions which were novel to the grandparents have become the intellectual atmosphere of the grandchildren. It is now impossible to return upon the past—to gild the refined gold, or to paint the lily of the supreme poets. Their vigour may survive in their successors : but their inspiration has taken form for ever in their poems. What then remains for the third generation of artists ? They have either to reproduce their models—and this is stifling to true genius ; or they have to seek novelty at the risk of impairing the strength or the beauty which has become stereotyped. Less deeply interested in the great ideas by which they have been educated, and of which they are in no sense the creators, incapable of competing on the old ground with their elders, they are obliged to go afield for striking situations, to force sentiment and pathos, to subordinate the harmony of the whole to the melody of the parts, to sink the prophet in the poet, the hierophant in the charmer.

This law of sequence is widely applicable. It will be seen to control the history of all uninterrupted artistic dynasties. Greek sculpture, for example, passes from the austere, through the perfect, to the simply elegant. The artist of the Æginetan pediment was wholly intent upon the faithful representation of heroic incidents. The event filled his mind : he sought to express it as energetically as he could. Pheidias stands on the ground of accomplished art. The Mythus selected for treat-

ment is developed with perfect fidelity, but also with regard to æsthetical effect. Praxiteles neglects the event, the substance of the Mythus. His interest in that has languished, and has been supplanted by enthusiasm for mere forms of beauty. He lavishes a Pheidian wealth of genius on separate figures and situations of no great import except for their consummate loveliness. In architecture, the genealogy of the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders points to the same law. Take another instance from modern painting. Giotto, Raphael, Correggio, differ less perhaps in actual calibre than in relative historical position. Giotto, intent upon the fundamental ideas of Christian mythology, determines to express them forcibly, faithfully, earnestly, without regarding aught but the best method of investing them with harmony, lucidity, and dignity. Raphael ascends a step, and combines the strength and purity of Giotto with elaborate beauty and classic finish of style. Correggio at his appearance finds all the great work done. The Christian mythus has been adequately set forth by his predecessors. He is driven to become the thaumaturgist of chiaroscuro, the audacious violator of unity in composition, the supreme painter of erotic paradise. Further development of the religious idea beyond that achieved by Raphael was impossible. Already in Raphael's work a compromise between religious austerity and pagan grace had been observable. The simplicity of Giotto was gone beyond recapture. Correggio could only be original by carrying onward to its ultimate perfection the element of beauty for its own sake introduced by Raphael. Like Euripides, Correggio was condemned to the misfortune of separating beauty from the idea, the body from the spirit. With them the forces inherent in the germs of their respective arts were exhausted. But those who rightly understand them must, we imagine, be prepared to accept with gratitude the existence of Correggio and Euripides, both as complementing Giotto and Æschylus, and also as accounting for the meridian splendour of Sophocles and Raphael.

Without the cadence of Euripides the majestic aria of Sophocles would hardly be played out. By studying the Correggiosity of Correggio we comprehend how much of mere æsthetic beauty is held in solution in the work of Raphael. It is thus, as it were, that, like projectiles, arts describe their parabolas and end.

To return in detail to the Greek tragedians. Æschylus determines at all hazards to exhibit the chosen mythus in its entirety, and to give full prominence to his religious idea. Hence we have to put up with much that is tedious—a whole *Choephoræ*, for example. But hence the unrivalled majesty of the *Agamemnon*. Sophocles manipulates his subject more artistically, so as to make it harmonious without losing sight of its internal source of unity. But he already begins to disintegrate the colossal work of Æschylus—notably in his separation of the Trilogy and in his moralizing of the idea of Nemesis. With Euripides the disintegration is complete. He neglects the mythus altogether. The theosophy of Æschylus, always implicit in Sophocles, survives as a mere conventionality in the work of Euripides. Finally, like Praxiteles, he carves single statues of eminent beauty; like Correggio, he conceals his poverty of design beneath a mass of redundant elegance. What we have really to regret in the art of Euripides is that he should have endeavoured to compete at all with Æschylus and Sophocles upon the old ground of the tales of Thebes and Troy. Where he breaks new ground, as in the *Medea*, the *Hippolytus*, and the *Bacchæ*, he proves himself a consummate master. Here the novelty of his method shocks no sense of traditional propriety. He is not driven to flip-pant scepticism in dealing with time-honoured myths, or to travesties of well-marked characters, in order to assert his individuality. These plays exhibit a complete unity of outward form, and a profound internal unity of passion and character. They are not surpassed in their own kind by anything that any

other poet had produced ; and if “the *chef d’œuvre* be adequate to the *chef d’œuvre*,” Euripides may here be pronounced the equal of Sophocles and Shakspeare.

To enter into an elaborate analysis of Euripides as a poet would be beyond the scope of this essay, which has for its subject the relation of the third great dramatist to his predecessors and to Greek tragedy in general. Yet something must be added to justify the opinion just expressed, that, though Euripides suffered by the constraint under which he laboured in competition with rivals who had nearly exhausted the resources of the tragic art, yet he displays beauties of his own of such transcendent merit as to place him in the first rank of the poets of the world. It would be a delightful task to attempt to do him justice in the teeth of a malevolent generation of critics, led by Schlegel and Müller, who do not understand him—to summon from the shadows of the Attic stage the “magnificent witch” Medea, pure-souled Polyxena, wifely Alcestis, fiery-hearted Phædra, chaste and cold Hippolytus, Andromache upon her chariot a royal slave, Orestes in his agony soothed by a sister’s ministrations, the sunny piety of Ion, the self-devotion of Menoikeus—intermingling perchance these pictured forms, pure, statuesque and clear as frescoes from Pompeii, with choric odes and exquisite descriptions. The lyrics of Euripides are among the choicest treasures of Greek poetry: they flow like mountain rivulets, flashing with sunbeams, eddying in cool shady places, rustling through leaves of mint, forget-me-not, marsh-marigold, and dock. His landscapes are most vivid: in ancient poetry there is nothing to compete with the pictures of Cithæron, where the Bacchantes lie limb-length beneath the silver-firs, their snakes asleep, and the mountain air ruffling their loose curls ; or with the cave of Polyphemus, where the satyrs lead their flocks from pasture up the valley between stone-pine and chestnut-tree to the lawns that overhang dark purple sea-waves. In the depart-

ment of the picturesque Euripides is unrivalled. His paintings have the truth to nature, the delicately modulated outline, and the facile grace of the most perfect bas-reliefs or frescoes.

But to attempt this labour of criticism would be to write a book upon Euripides. It must be enough in this place to illustrate one quality which occupies a large space in the dramatic ethics of Euripides, and forms the motive of the action of his leading characters. The old religious basis of Nemesis having been virtually abandoned by him, Euripides fell back upon the morality of passions and emotions. For his cardinal virtue he chose what the Greeks called *εὐψυχία*, stout-heartedness, pluck in the noblest sense of the word,—that temper of the soul which prepared the individual to sacrifice himself for the State, and to triumph in pain or death or dogged endurance rather than give way to feebler instincts. That this quality should be prominent in Euripides is not without significance. Not only did it enable him to construct most thrilling scenes: it also harmonized with the advancing tendencies of Greek philosophy, which already held within itself the germs of Stoicism—or the theory of *κατεπεία*.* One of the most dramatic exhibitions of this virtue occurs in the *Phænissæ*. The Seven Captains are beleaguering Thebes, and affairs are going ill with the garrison. Teiresias, however, prophesies that if Creon's son, Menoikeus, will kill himself, Thebes must triumph. Creon accepts the prophecy but seeks to save his son; he sends for Menoikeus and instructs him how he may escape to Dodona. Menoikeus pretends to agree with what his father counsels, and, after true Euripidean fashion, sends

* It may be questioned whether a Dorian type of character was not in the mind of Euripides when he constructed his ideal of feminine heroism. What Plutarch in the life of Cleomenes says of Cratesiclea and the wife of Panteus reads like a commentary on the tragedies of *Macaria*, *Polyxena*, and *Iphigenia*. Xenophon's partiality for the Spartans indicates the same current of sympathy. Philosophical analysis was leading up to an eclectic Hellenism.

Creon to get his journey-money. Then the boy, left alone upon the stage, turns to the Chorus and begins his speech :—

“How well have I my father’s fears allayed
 With fraudulent words to compass my own will !
 Lo, he would filch me hence, with shame to me,
 Loss to my fatherland. An old man’s heart
 Deserves some pity.—What pity can I claim
 If I betray the land that gave me birth ?
 Know then that I shall go and save the state,
 Giving my life and dying for this land.
 For this is shameful ; if beneath no ban
 Of oracles, bound by no force of fate,
 But standing to their shields, men dare to die
 Under the ramparts of the town they love ;
 While I, untrue to brother and to sire,
 And to my country, like a felon slink
 Far hence in exile ! Lo, where’er I roam,
 All men would call me coward ! By great Zeus,
 Who dwells among the stars, by bloody Ares,
 Who made the dragon-seed in days of old
 Lords of the land, I swear this shall not be !
 But I will go, and on the topmost towers,
 Standing, will dash into the murky den
 Where couched the dragon, as the prophet bade.
 Thus will I free my country. I have spoken.
 See, then, I leave you : it is no mean gift
 In death I give the city ; but my land
 I purge of sickness. If all men were bold
 Of their good things to work the public weal,
 I ween our towns had less of ills to bear,
 And more of blessings for all days to be.”

With the *Phœnissæ* in our hands, one other passage may be translated which displays the power possessed by Euripides of composing a dramatic picture, and presenting pathos to the eye. Eteocles and Polyneices have been wounded to the death. Jocasta, their mother, and Antigone, their sister, go forth to the battle-field to find them :—

“Then rushed their wretched mother on the twain
 And seeing them thus wounded unto death,
 Wailed : ‘O, my sons ! too late, too late I come

To succour you !' Then, clasping them by turns,
 She wept and mourned the long toil of her breasts,
 Groaning ; and by her side their sister groaned :
 ' O, ye who should have been my mother's stay
 In age, O, thoughtless of my maiden years
 Unwedded, dearest brothers !' From his chest
 Heaving a heavy breath, King Eteocles heard
 His mother, and stretched forth a cold damp hand
 On hers, and nothing said, but with his eyes
 Spake to her by his tears, showing kind thoughts
 In symbols. Then the other, who still breathed,
 Looked at his sister, and the queen, and said,
 ' We have perished, mother ! yea, I pity thee,
 And this my sister, and my brother dead ;
 For dear he was—my foe—and yet was dear.
 Bury me, O, my mother, and thou, too,
 Sweet sister, in my father's land, I pray ;
 And close my dying eyelids with thy hand,
 Mother !'—Upon his eyes he placed her hand—
 ' And fare you well ! Now darkness clips me round.'
 Then both breathed out their weary life together.
 But the queen, when she saw this direful end,
 Maddened with anguish drew the dead man's sword,
 And wrought things horrible ; for through her throat
 She thrust the blade : and on her dearest falling
 Dies, and lies stretched, clasping both in her arms."

But to return to the virtue of *εὐψυχία*. The play of *Hecuba* contains a still more touching picture of heroism in death than that displayed by Menoikeus. Troy has been taken. Ulysses is sent by the Greeks to inform Hecuba that her daughter Polyxena must be sacrificed. Hecuba reminds him how in former days he had come disguised as a spy to Troy, and how she had recognised him, and, at his strong entreaty, spared him from discovery. In return for this, let him now spare her daughter. Frigidly and politely Ulysses replies, "True, lady, a life for life. You saved mine, I would do something to save yours ; but your daughter is quite another person. I have not the pleasure of having received benefits from her. I must trouble her to follow me." Then Polyxena breaks silence :—

"I see thee, how beneath thy robe, O king,
 Thy hand is hidden, thy face turned from mine,
 Lest I should touch thee by the beard and pray.
 Fear not : thou hast escaped the god of prayers
 For my part. I will rise and follow thee,
 Driven by strong need ; yea, and not loth to die.
 Lo ! if I should not seek death, I were found
 A cowardly, life-loving, selfish soul !
 For why should I live ? Was my sire not king
 Of all broad Phrygia ? Thus my life began ;
 Then was I nurtured on fair bloom of hope
 To be the bride of kings ; no small the suit,
 I ween, of lovers seeking me : thus I
 Was once—ah, woe is me ! of Idan dames
 Mistress and queen, 'mid maidens like a star
 Conspicuous, peer of gods, except for death ;
 And now I am a slave : this name alone
 Makes me in love with death—so strange it is."

Sheer contempt of life, when life has to be accepted on dishonourable terms, is the virtue of Polyxena. But, so far, though we may admire her fortitude, we have not been touched by her misfortune. Euripides reserves the pathos, after his own fashion, for a picture. Talthybius, the herald, is telling Hecuba how her daughter died :—

"The whole vast concourse of the Achaian host
 Stood round the tomb to see your daughter die.
 Achilles' son taking her by the hand,
 Placed her upon the mound, and I stayed near ;
 And youths, the flower of Greece, a chosen few,
 With hands to check thy heifer, should she bound,
 Attended. From a cup of carven gold,
 Raised full of wine, Achilles' son poured forth
 Libation to his sire, and bade me sound
 Silence throughout the whole Achaian host.
 I, standing there, cried in the midst these words :
 ' Silence, Achaians ! let the host be still !
 Hush, hold your voices ! ' Breathless stayed the crowd ;
 But he : ' O, son of Peleus, father mine,
 Take these libations pleasant to thy soul,
 Draughts that allure the dead : come, drink the black
 Pure maiden's blood wherewith, the host and I

Sue thee : be kindly to us ; loose our prow,
 And let our barks go free ; give safe return
 Homeward from Troy to all, and happy voyage.'
 Such words he spake, and the crowd prayed assent.
 Then from the scabbard, by its golden hilt,
 He drew the sword, and to the chosen youths
 Signalled that they should bring the maid ; but she,
 Knowing her hour was come, spake thus, and said :
 ' O, men of Argos who have sacked my town,
 Lo, of free will I die ! let no man touch
 My body : boldly will I stretch my throat.
 Nay, but I pray you set me free, then slay ;
 That free I thus may perish : 'mong the dead,
 Being a queen, I blush to be called slave.'
 The people shouted, and King Agamemnon
 Bade the youths loose the maid, and set her free :
 She, when she heard the order of the chiefs,
 Seizing her mantle, from the shoulder down
 To the soft centre of her snowy waist
 Tore it, and showed her breasts and bosom fair
 As in a statue. Bending then with knee
 On earth, she spake a speech most piteous :
 ' See you this breast, oh ! youth, if breast you will,
 Strike it ; take heart : or if beneath my neck,
 Lo ! here my throat is ready for your sword !'
 He willing not, yet willing, pity-stirred
 In sorrow for the maiden, with his blade
 Severed the channels of her breath : blood flowed ;
 And she, though dying, still had thought to fall
 In seemly wise hiding what eyes should see not.
 But when she breathed her life out from the blow,
 Then was the Argive host in divers way
 Of service parted ; for some bringing leaves,
 Strewed them upon the corpse ; some piled a pyre,
 Dragging pine trunks and boughs ; and he who bore none,
 Heard from the bearers many a bitter word :
 ' Standest thou, villain ? Hast thou then no robe,
 No funeral honours for the maid to bring ?
 Wilt thou not go and get for her who died
 Most nobly, bravest-souled, some gift ?' Thus they
 Spake of thy child in death : O, thou most blessed
 Of women in thy daughter, most undone !'

The quality of *εὐψυχία* which we have seen in Menoikeus
 and Polyxena, is displayed by Macaria in the *Heracleidæ* and

by Iphigenia in the last scene of her tragedy at Aulis. Another shade of the same virtue gives a peculiar attraction to the self-devotion of Alcestis in her death, and of Electra in her attendance on the brain-sick Orestes. It is noticeable that Euripides, the so-called woman-hater, has alone of the Greek poets subsequent to Homer, with the single exception of Sophocles, devoted his genius to the delineation of female characters. It is impossible to weigh occasional sententious sarcasms against such careful studies of heroic virtue in woman as the Iphigenia, the Electra, the Polyxena, the Alcestis of our poet. Aristophanes, who was himself the worst enemy Athenian ladies ever met with, describes Euripides as a foe to women, apparently because he thought fit to treat them, not as automata, but as active, passionate, and powerful agents in the play of human life.*

But to return to our illustrations of *εὐψυχία*. In the *Medea* and the *Hippolytus* Euripides again displays this virtue of stern Stoicism in two women. But here the heroines are guilty : their Spartan endurance of anguish to the death is tempered with crime. These tragedies are the master-pieces of the poet; in each of them the single passion of an individual forms the subject of the drama. Separated from all antecedents of ancestral doom, Medea and Phædra work out the dreadful consequences of their own tempestuous will. Not *Othello*, and not *Faust*, have a more complete internal unity of motive. No modern play has an equal external harmony of form. Medea was one of the most romantic figures of Greek story. Daughter of the sungod in the Colchian land of mystery and magic, she unfolded like some poisonous flower, gorgeous to look upon, with flaunting petals and intoxicating scent, but deadly. Terrible indeed in wiles, she learned to love Jason. By a

* The real cause of offence was the prominence given by Euripides to the passion of unholy love in some of his heroines ; to the interest and sympathy he created for Phædra, Sthenobœa, and others.

series of crimes, in which the hero participated as her accomplice, and of which he reaped the benefits—by the betrayal of her father's trust, by the murder of her brother, by the butchery of Pelias,—she placed her lover on the throne of Thessaly. Then Jason, at the height of his prosperity, forgetting the love, as of some tigress, that the sorceress bore him, forgetting too her fatal power of life and death, cast his eyes on Glauké, the king's daughter of Corinth, and bade Medea go forth with her sons, a Pariah,—a dishonoured wife. Whither should she turn? To Colchis, and the father whose son she slew? To Thessaly, where the friends of Pelias still live? Jason does not care. His passion for Medea has vanished like a mist. Their common trials, common crimes—trials which should have endeared them to each other; crimes which were as strong as hell to bind them—have melted from his mind like dew. He only wishes to be rid of the fell woman, and to live a peaceful life with innocent home-keeping folk. But on one thing Jason has not reckoned—on the awful fury of his old love; he forgets how she wrought by magic and by poison in his need, and how in her own need she may do things terrible and strange. In the same way we often think that we will lightly leave some ancient, strong, habitual sin, of old time passionately cherished, of late grown burdensome; but not so easily may the new pure life be won. Between our souls and it there stands the fury of the past.

Medea in her house, like a lioness in her den, has crouched sleepless, without food, not to be touched or spoken to, since the first news of Glauké's projected bridal was told. No one knows what she is meditating. Only the nurse of her children mistrusts her fiery eyes and thunderous silence, her viperish loose hair and throbbing skin. The moment is finely prepared. Some Corinthian ladies visit her, and she, though loth to rise, does so at their prayer, excusing her reluctance by illness, and by a foreigner's want of familiarity with their customs. Pale,

calm, and terrible, she stands before them. From this first appearance of Medea to the end of the play, her one figure occupies the whole space of the theatre. Her spirit is in the air, and the progress of the action only dilates the impression which she has produced. The altercations with Creon and with Jason are artfully conducted so as to arouse our sympathy and make us feel that such a nature is being driven by the intemperance and selfishness of others into a *cul-de-sac* of crime. The facility with which she disposes in thought of her chief foes, as if they were so many flies that have to be caught and killed, is eminently impressive. "Many are the ways of death : I will stretch three corpses in the palace—Creon's, the bride's, my husband's. My only thought is now of means—whether to burn them, or to cut their throats—perchance the old tried way of poison were the best. They are dead." Καὶ δὴ τεθρᾶσι. Medea knows *they* cannot escape her. For the rest, she will consider her own plans. In the scene with Jason she rises to an appalling altitude. Her words are winged snakes and the breath of furnaces. There is no querulous recrimination, no impotence of anger ; but her spirit glows and flickers dragon-like against him, as she stands above him on the pedestal of his ingratitude. But when he has gone, and she sits down to reconsider her last act of vengeance—the murder of his sons and hers—then begins the tragic agony of her own soul. These lines reveal the contest between a mother's love and the pride of an injured woman, the εἰψυχία of one who must steel her heart in order to preserve her fame for fortitude and power :—

" O Zeus, and justice of high Jove, and light
Of Sun, all seeing ! Now victorious
Over my foes shall I pace forth, sweet friends,
To triumph !

" I shudder at the deed that will be done
Hereafter : for my children I shall slay—
Mine ; there is none shall snatch them from me now.

“Let no one deem me timid, weak of hand,
Placidly tame ; but of the other temper,
Harsh to my foes and kindly to my friends.”

Then when Glauké, arrayed in the robe Medea sent her, is smouldering to ashes with her father in slow phosphorescent flame, Medea sends for her children and makes that last speech which is the very triumph of Euripidean rhetoric :—

“O, children, children ! you have still a city,
A home, where, lost to me and all my woe,
You will live out your lives without a mother !
But I—lo ! I am for another land,
Leaving the joy of you :—to see you happy,
To deck your marriage-bed, to greet your bride,
To light your wedding torch shall not be mine !
O me, thrice wretched in my own self-will !
In vain then, dear my children ! did I rear you ;
In vain I travailed, and with wearing sorrow
Bore bitter anguish in the hour of childbirth !
Yea, of a sooth, I had great hope of you,
That you should cherish my old age, and deck
My corpse with loving hands, and make me blessed
'Mid women in my death. But now, ah me !
Hath perished that sweet dream. For long without you
I shall drag out a dreary doleful age.
And you shall never see your mother more
With your dear eyes : for all your life is changed.
Woe, woe !
Why gaze you at me with your eyes, my children ?
Why smile your last sweet smile ? Ah ! me ; ah ! me !
What shall I do ? My heart dissolves within me,
Friends, when I see the glad eyes of my sons !
I cannot. No : my will that was so steady,
Farewell to it. They too shall go with me :
Why should I wound their sire with what wounds them,
Heaping tenfold his woes on my own head ?
No, no, I shall not. Perish my proud will.
Yet whence this weakness ? Do I wish to reap
The scorn that springs from enemies unpunished ?
Dare it I must. What craven fool am I,
To let soft thoughts flow trickling from my soul !
Go, boys, into the house : and he who may not
Be present at my solemn sacrifice—

Let him see to it. My hand shall not falter.
 Ah ! ah !
 Nay, do not, O my heart ! do not this thing !
 Suffer them, O poor fool ; yea, spare thy children !
 There in thy exile they will gladden thee.
 Not so : by all the plagues of nethermost Hell
 It shall not be that I, that I should suffer
 My foes to triumph and insult my sons !
 Die must they : this must be, and since it must,
 I, I myself will slay them, I who bore them.
 So it is fixed, and there is no escape.
 Even as I speak, the crown is on her head,
 The bride is dying in her robes, I know it.
 But since this path most piteous I tread,
 Sending them forth on paths more piteous far,
 I will embrace my children. O, my sons,
 Give, give your mother your dear hands to kiss !
 O, dearest hands, and mouths most dear to me,
 And forms and noble faces of my sons !
 Be happy even there : what here was yours,
 Your father robs you of. O, loved embrace !
 O, tender touch and sweet breath of my boys !
 Go, go, go, leave me ! Lo, I cannot bear
 To look on you : my woes have overwhelmed me !
 Now know I all the ill I have to do :
 But rage is stronger than my better mind,
 Rage, cause of greatest crimes and griefs to mortals." *

Phædra, the heroine of the *Hippolytus*, supplies us with a new conception of the same thirst for *εὐκλεία*—the same *εὐψυχία*, *γενναϊότης*, indifference to life when honour is at stake. The pride of her good name drives Phædra to a crime more detestable than Medea's, because her victim Hippolytus is eminently innocent. I do not want to dwell upon the pining sickness of Phædra, which Euripides has wrought with exquisitely painful details, but rather to call attention to Hippolytus. Side by side with the fever of Phædra is the pure fresh health of the hunter-hero. The scent of forest-glades, where he pursues the

* The whole of this splendid speech should be compared with the fragment of Neophron's *Medea*, on which it is obviously modelled. See my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets*, p. 313.

deer with Artemis, surrounds him ; the sea-breeze from the sands, where he trains his horses, moves his curls. His piety is as untainted as his purity ; it is the maiden-service of a maiden-saint. In his observance of the oath extorted from him by Phædra's nurse, in his obedience to his father's will, in his kindness to his servants, in his gentle endurance of a painful death, and in the joy with which he greets the virgin huntress when she comes to visit him, Euripides has firmly traced the ideal of a guileless, tranquil manhood. Hippolytus among the ancients was the Paladin of chastity, the Percival of their romance. Nor is any knight of mediæval legend more true and pure than he. Hippolytus first comes upon the stage with a garland of wild flowers for Artemis :—

“ Lady, for thee this garland have I woven
 Of wilding flowers plucked from an unshorn meadow,
 Where neither shepherd dares to feed his flock,
 Nor ever scythe hath swept, but through the mead
 Unshorn in spring the bee pursues her labours,
 And maiden modesty with running rills
 Waters the garden. Sweet queen, take my crown
 To deck thy golden hair : my hand is holy.
 To me alone of men belongs this honour,
 To be with thee and answer when thou speakest ;
 Yea, for I hear thy voice but do not see thee.
 So may I end my life as I began.”

Even in this bald translation some of the fresh morning feeling, as of cool fields and living waters, and pure companionship and a heart at peace, transpires. Throughout the play, in spite of the usual Euripidean blemishes of smart logic-chopping and pragmatism, this impression is maintained. Hippolytus moves through it with the athletic charm that belongs to such statues as that of Meleager and his dog in the Vatican. At the end the young hero is carried from the sea-beach, mangled, and panting out his life amid intolerable pain and fever-thirst. His lamentations are loud and deep as he

calls on Death the healer. Then suddenly is he aware of the presence of Artemis :—

“O; breath and perfume of the goddess ! Lo,
I feel thee even in torment, and am eased !
Here in this place is Artemis the queen.”

The scent of the forest coolness has been blown upon him.
His death will now be calm.

“*A.* Poor man ! she is ; the goddess thou most loved.
H. Seest thou me, lady, in what plight I lie ?
A. I see thee ; but I may not drop a tear.
H. Thou hast no huntsman and no servant now.
A. Nay, truly, since thou diest, dear my friend.
H. No groom, no guardian of thy sculptured shrine.
A. ’Twas Kupris, the arch-fiend, who wrought this woe.
H. Ah, me ! Now know I what god made me die.
A. Shorn of her honour, vexed with thy chaste life.
H. Three of us her one spite—behold ! hath slain.
A. Thy father, and his wife, and thirdly thee.
H. Yea, and I therefore mourn my sire’s ill hap.
A. Snared was he by a goddess’s deceit.
H. Oh ! for your sorrow in this woe, my father !
T. Son ! I have perished : life has now no joy.
H. I mourn this error more for you than me.
T. Would, son, I were a corpse instead of you.
A. Stay ! for though earth and gloom encircle thee,
Not even thus the anger unavenged
Of Kupris shall devour at will thy body :
For I, with my own hand, to pay for thee,
Will pierce of men him whom she mostly dotes on,
With these inevitable shafts. But thou,
As guerdon for thine anguish, shalt henceforth
Gain highest honours in Trezenian land,
My gift. Unwedded maids before their bridals
Shall shear their locks for thee, and thou for ever
Shalt reap the harvest of unnumbered tears.
Yea, and for aye, with lyre and song the virgins
Shall keep thy memory ; nor shall Phædra’s love
For thee unnamed fall in oblivious silence.
But thou, O son of aged Ægeus, take
Thy child within thy arms and cherish him ;
For without guile thou slewest him, and men,

When the gods lead, may well lapse into error.
 Thee too I counsel ; hate not thy own father,
 Hippolytus : 'twas fate that ruined thee."

Thus Artemis reconciles father and son. Hippolytus dies slowly in the arms of Theseus, and the play ends. The appearance of the goddess, as a lady of transcendent power more than as a divine being—her vindictive hatred of Aphrodite, and the moral that she draws about the fate by which Hippolytus died and Theseus sinned, are all thoroughly Euripidean. Not so would Æschylus the theologian, or Sophocles the moralist, have dealt with the conclusion of the play. But neither would have drawn a more touching picture.

The following scene from the opening of the *Orestes* may be taken as a complete specimen of the manner of Euripides when working pathos to its highest pitch, and when desirous of introducing into mythic history the realities of common life. Electra appears as the devoted sister ; Orestes as the invalid brother ; the Chorus are somewhat importunate, but, at the same time, sympathetic visitors. This extract also serves to illustrate the Euripidean habit of mingling lyrical dialogue with the more regular Iambic in passages which do not exactly correspond to the *Commos* of the elder tragedians, but which require highly-wrought expression. Helen has just left Electra. As the wife of Menelaus walks away, the daughter of Agamemnon follows her with her eyes, and speaks thus :—

"*El.* O nature ! what a curse art thou 'mid men—
 Yea, and a safeguard to the nobly-tempered !

[*Points her finger at Helen.*

See how she snipped the tips of her long hair,
 Saving its beauty ! She's the same woman still.—
 May the gods hate thee for the ruin wrought
 On me, on him, on Hellas ! Woe is me !

[*Sees the Chorus advancing.*

Here come my friends again with lamentations,
 To join their wails with mine : they'll drive him far

From placid slumber, and will waste mine eyes
With weeping when I see my brother mad.

[*Speaking to the Chorus.*

O dearest maidens, tread with feet of wool ;
Come softly, make no rustling, raise no cry :
For though your kindness be right dear to me,
Yet to wake him will work me double mischief.

[*The Chorus enters.*

Ch. Softly, softly ! let your tread
Fall upon the ground like snow !
Every sound be dumb and dead :
Breathe and speak in murmurs low !

El. Further from the couch, I pray you ; further yet, and yet away !

Ch. Even so, dear maid, you see that I obey.

El. Ah, my friend, speak softly, slowly,
Like the sighing of a rush.

Ch. See I speak and answer lowly
With a stealthy smothered hush.

El. That is right : come hither now ; come boldly forward to my
side ;

Come, and say what need hath brought you : for at length with
watching tried,

Lo, he sleeps, and on the pillow spreads his limbs and tresses
wide.

Ch. How is he? Dear lady, say :
Let us hear your tale, and know
Whether you have joy to-day,
Whether sorrow brings you low.

El. He is breathing still, but slightly groaning in his sleep away.

Ch. O poor man ! but tell us plainer what you say.

El. Hush ! or you will scare the pleasant
Sleep that to his eyelids brings
Brief oblivion of the present.

Ch. Ah, thrice wretched race that springs
Burdened with the god-sent curses of abhorred deeds !

El. Ah me !

Guilty was the voice of Phœbus, when enthroned for prophecy,
He decreed my mother's murder—mother murdered guiltily !

Ch. Look you, lady, on his bed,
How he gently stirs and sighs !

El. Woe is me ! His sleep hath fled,
Frightened by your noisy cries !

Ch. Nay ; I thought he sleeping lay.

El. Hence, I bid you, hence away
From the bedside, from the house !

Cease your noise ;
 Subdue your voice ;
 Stay not here to trouble us !

Ch. He is sleeping, and you rightly caution us.

El. Holy mother, mother Night !

Thou who sheddest sleep on every wearied wight !
 Arise from Erebus, arise
 With plummy pinions light :
 Hover o'er the house of Atreus ; and upon our aching eyes,
 Wearied with woe,
 With grief brought low,
 Solace bring 'mid miseries.
 Silence ! Hush ! what noise was this ?
 Can you ne'er your tongue restrain,
 And allow soft slumber's kiss
 To refresh his fevered brain ?

Ch. Tell me, lady, what the close
 Of his grief is like to be ?

El. Death. Nought else will end his woes.
 Lo, he fasts continually.

Ch. Alas ! Alas ! his fate is sure.

El. By the promise, to make pure
 Hands a mother's life-blood stained,
 Phoebus brought
 Woe, and wrought
 All the grief that we have gained.

Ch. Just it was to slay the slayer ; yet the deed with crime was
 fraught.

El. Thou art dead : oh, thou art dead,
 Mother, who didst bear me ! mother, who didst shed
 A father's blood, and slay
 The children of thy bed !
 We are dying, we are dying, like the dead, and weak as they :
 For thou art gone,
 And I am wan,
 Weeping, sighing night and day !
 Look upon me, friends, behold
 How my withered life must run,
 Childless, homeless, sad and cold,
 Comfortless beneath the sun.

Ch. Come hither, maid Electra, to the couch ;
 Lest haply he should breathe his life away
 Unheeded : I like not this deep dead languor.

[*Orestes wakes up.*]

Or. O soothing sleep ! dear friend ! best nurse of sickness !

How sweetly came you in my hour of need.
 Blest Lethe of all woes, how wise you are,
 How worthy of the prayers of wretched men !
 Whence came I to this place ? · How journeyed I ?
 I cannot think : my former mind is vanished.

El. O dearest, how hath your sleep gladdened me !
 Say, can I help to soothe or raise your body ?

Or. Yes, take me, take me : with your kind hands wipe
 The foam of fever from my lips and eyes.

El. Sweet is this service to me ; I am glad
 To soothe my brother with a sister's hand.

Or. Support me with your breast, and fan my forehead ;
 Brush the loose hair : I scarce can see for sickness.

El. Poor head ! How rough and tangled are the curls,
 How haggard is your face with long neglect !

Or. Now lay me back upon the bed again :
 When the fit leaves me, I am weak and helpless.

El. Yea ; and the couch is some relief in sickness,
 A sorry friend, but one that must be borne with.

Or. Raise me once more upright, and turn my body :
 Sick men are hard to please, through wayward weakness.

El. How would you like to put your feet to earth ?
 'Tis long since you stood up ; and change is pleasant.

Or. True : for it gives a show of seeming health ;
 And shows are good, although there be no substance.

[Orestes changes his posture and sits at ease.]

El. Now listen to me, dearest brother mine,
 While the dread Furies leave you space to think.

Or. What have you new to say ? Good news will cheer me ;
 But of what's bad I have enough already.

El. Menelaus is here, your father's brother :
 His ships are safely moored in Nauplia.

Or. What ! Has he come to end your woes and mine ?
 He is our kinsman and our father's debtor.

El. He has : and this is surety for my words—
 Helen hath come with him from Troy, is here.

Or. If heaven had saved but him, he'd now be happier :
 But with his wife, he brings a huge curse home.

El. Yea : Tyndareus begat a brood of daughters
 Marked out for obloquy, a shame through Hellas.

Or. Be you then other than the bad ; you can :
 Make not fine speeches, but be rightly minded !

[As he speaks, he becomes excited.]

El. Ah me, my brother ! your eyes roll and tremble—
 One moment sane, and now swift frenzy fires you !

[Orestes speaks to phantoms in the air.]

- Or.* Mother, I sue to thee : nay, mother, hound not
Those blood-faced, snake-encircled women on me !
There ! There ! See there—close by they bound upon me !
- El.* Stay, wretched brother ; start not from the bed !
For nought you see of what seems clear and certain.
- Or.* O Phœbus ! They will slay me, those dog-faced,
Fierce-eyed, infernal ministers, dread goddesses !
- El.* I will not leave you ! but with woven arms
Will stay you from the direful spasm-throes.

[*Orestes hurls Electra from him.*]

- Or.* Let go ! Of my damned Furies thou art one,
That with thy grip wouldst hale me down to hell !
- El.* Ah, woe is me ! what succour shall I find,
Seeing the very gods conspire against us ?
- Or.* Give me my bow and arrows, Phœbus' gift,
Wherewith Apollo bade me fight the fiends,
If they should scare me with wild-eyed delirium.
Some god shall feel the fury of man's hand,
Unless ye vanish forth from out my sight !

[*He threatens the phantoms.*]

Hear ye not ! See ye not the feathery wings
Of swift, sure-striking shafts, ready to flutter ?
Ha ! Ha !
Why linger here ? Go, sweep with outspread pinions
The windy sky ! Hence, and complain of Phœbus !
Woe's me !

[*Recovering his reason again.*]

Why waste I breath, wearying my lungs in vain ?
Where am I ? From my bed how leaped I—when ?
'Midmost the waves once more I see fair weather.
Sister, why weep you ? Wherefore veil your head ?
I blush to see you partner of my woe,
Blush that a girl should suffer in my sickness.
Nay, do not pine thus, bowed beneath my burden—
All mine ;—you said but yea, 'twas I who shed
Our mother's blood : but Loxias I blame,
Who urging me to most unholy deeds
Helped me with words, in act availed me nothing.
Yea, and I think my sire, if, face to face,
I asked him—is it right to slay my mother ?
Would lengthen many prayers, beseeching me
Never to draw my sword on her who bare me,
Seeing he might not see the sun again,
And I am doomed to bear this weight of horrors.—
But now unveil your face again, dear sister,

And cease from weeping—even though we be
 Ringed round with sorrows. When you see me downcast,
 Soothe you my terror and my frenzied soul—
 Soothe and caress me ; yea, and when you moan,
 'Tis mine to stay and comfort as I can :
 For these kind services of friends are fair,
 But, dear, sad sister, go into the house,
 And give your watchful eyes to sleep, and rest ;
 Take food, and with fair water bathe yourself.
 For think, if you should fail me, if by watching
 You take some sickness, then we're lost : 'tis you,
 You only, are my help ; all else is vanished.

El. Not so. With you to die I choose, with you
 To live : it is all one : for if you perish,
 What shall I do—a woman ? How shall I,
 Brotherless, friendless, fatherless, alone,
 Live on ? Nay, if you ask it, I will do
 Your will : but, brother, rest you on your bed ;
 Nor take the terror and the startling fear
 For more than phantoms : stay upon the couch.
 For though one is not sick, and only seems,
 Yet is this pain and weariness to mortals."

This scene, for variety of motive and effect, is not excelled by any passage in ancient tragedy. The scope which it afforded for impressive acting must have been immense, though it is difficult to understand how the fixed masks and conventional dresses of the Greek stage could have been adapted to the violent and frequent changes of mood exhibited by Orestes. Adequately to render the effect of the lyrical dialogue between Electra and the Chorus is very difficult. I have attempted to maintain in some degree the antistrophic pauses, and by the use of rhyme, to hint how very near the tragedy of the Greeks approached, in scenes like this, to the Italian opera. The entrance of the Chorus singing "Silence," can only be paralleled by passages in which the spies or conspirators of Rossini or Mozart appear upon the stage, whispering "Zitto, Zitto !" to the sound of subdued music. In the same way Electra's impassioned apostrophe to Night must have been the subject of an elaborate Aria.

It is hard, while still beneath the overshadowing presence of so great a master as Euripides, to have patience with the critics and the scholars who scorn him—critics who cannot comprehend him, scholars who have not read him since they were at school. Decadence ! is their cry. Yet what would they have? Would they ask for a second Sophocles, or a revived Æschylus? That being clearly impossible, beyond all scope of wish, why will they not be satisfied with beauty as luminous as that of a Greek statue or a Greek landscape, with feeling as profound as humanity itself, and with wisdom “musical as is Apollo’s lute?” These are the qualities of a great poet, and we contend that Euripides possesses them in an eminent degree. It is false criticism, surely, to do as Schlegel, Müller, and Bunsen have successively done*—to measure Euripides by the standard of the success of his predecessors, or to ransack his plays for illustrations of pet dramatic theories, and then because he will not bear these tests, to refuse to see his own distinguished merits. It would sometimes seem as if our nature were exhausted by its admiration of a Sophocles or a Shakspeare. There is no enthusiasm left for Euripides and Fletcher.

Euripides, after all is said, incontestably displays the quality of radiancy. On this I should be willing to base a portion of his

* Goethe was very severe on the critics who could not appreciate Euripides : “to feel and respect a great personality, one must be something oneself. All those who denied the sublime to Euripides, were either poor wretches incapable of comprehending such sublimity, or shameless charlatans, who, by their presumption, wished to make more of themselves, and really did make more of themselves than they were.” (Eckermann’s *Conversations of Goethe*, English ed., vol. ii. p. 377.) In another place he indicates the spirit in which any adverse criticism of Euripides should be attempted : “A poet whom Socrates called his friend, whom Aristotle lauded, whom Menander admired, and for whom Sophocles and the city of Athens put on mourning on hearing of his death, must certainly have been something. If a modern man like Schlegel must pick out faults in so great an ancient, he ought only to do it upon his knees.” (*ib.*, vol. i. p. 378.) Again (*ib.*, vol. i. p. 260), he energetically

claim to rank as a great poet. An admirer of Æschylus or Sophocles might affirm that neither Æschylus nor Sophocles chose to use their art for the display of thrilling splendour. However that may be, Euripides, alone of Greeks, with the exception of Aristophanes, entered the fairyland of dazzling fancy which Calderon and Shakspeare and Fletcher trod. The *Bacchæ*, like the *Birds*, proves what otherwise we might have hardly known, that there lacked not Greeks for whom the *Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would have been intelligible. Meanwhile, in making any estimate of the merits of Euripides, it would be unfair to omit mention of the enthusiasm felt for him by contemporaries and posterity. Mr. Browning, in the beautiful monument which he has erected to the fame of Euripides, has chosen for poetical treatment the well-known story of Athenians rescued from captivity by recitation of the verses of their poet.* There is no reason to doubt a story which attests so strongly to the acceptance in which Euripides was held at large among the Greeks. Socrates, again, visited the theatre on the occasion of any representation of his favourite's plays. By the new comedians, Menander and Philemon, Euripides was regarded as a divine miracle. Tragedy and comedy, so dissimilar in their origins, had approximated to a coalition ; tragedy losing its religious dignity, comedy quitting its obscene though splendid personalities ; both meeting on the common ground of daily life. In the decadence of Greece it was not Æschylus and Aristophanes, but Euripides and Menander, who were learned and read and quoted. The colossal theosophemes of Æschylus called for profound reflec-

combats the opinion that Euripides had caused the decline of Greek tragedy.

* See Balaustion's *Adventure*. Since this chapter was first published, Mr. Browning has still further enforced his advocacy of Euripides by Aristophanes' *Apology*, while the great tragic poet has found a staunch defender from the carping critics of the Schlegel school in Mr. Mahaffy.

tion ; the Titanic jokes of Aristophanes taxed the imagination to its utmost stretch. But Euripides "the human, with his droppings of warm tears," gently touched and soothed the heart. Menander with his facile wisdom flattered the intellect of worldly men. The sentences of both were quotable at large and fit for all occasions. They were not too great, too lofty, too resplendent for the paths of common life. We have lost Menander, alas ! but we still possess Euripides. It seems a strange neglect of good gifts to shut our ears to his pathetic melodies and ringing eloquence—because, forsooth, Æschylus and Sophocles had the advantage of preceding him, and were superior artists in the bloom and heyday of the young world's prime.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARISTOPHANES.

Heine's critique on Aristophanes.—Aristophanes as a poet of the fancy.—The nature of his comic grossness.—Greek Comedy in its relation to the worship of Dionysus.—Greek acceptance of the animal conditions of humanity.—His Burlesque, Parody, Southern sense of fun.—Aristophanes and Menander.—His greatness as a Poet.—Glimpses of pathos.—His Conservatism and serious aim.—Socrates, Agathon, Euripides.—German critics of Aristophanes.—Ancient and Modern Comedy.—The *Birds*.—The *Clouds*.—Greek youth and education.—The Allegories of Aristophanes.—The *Thesmophoriazuseæ*.—Aristophanes and Plato.

“A DEEP idea of world-destruction (*Weltvernichtungsidee**) lies at the root of every Aristophanic comedy, and, like a fantastically ironical magic tree, springs up in it with blooming ornament of thoughts, with singing nightingales, and climbing, chattering apes.” This is a sentence translated from the German of Heinrich Heine, who, of all poets, was the one best fitted to appreciate the depth of Aristophanes, to pierce beneath his smiling comic mask, and to read the underlying *Weltvernichtungsidee* with what he calls its “jubilee of death and fireworks of annihilation.” Perhaps, as is common with German writers of imagination, Heine pushes his point too far, and insists with too much force upon the “jubilee of death,” “the

* It is almost impossible to translate this word, which will frequently recur in the essay, and which seems to depend for its force upon the conception of the satiric spirit, as that which “stets vernichtet,” the Mephistophilistic “verneinender Geist.”

fireworks of annihilation." The strong wine of his own paradox intoxicates his judgment, and his taste is somewhat perverted by the Northern tendency to brood upon the more fantastic aspects of his subject. It is not so much Aristophanes himself whom Heine sees, as Aristophanes reflected in the magic mirror of his own melancholy and ironical fancy. Yet, after making these deductions, the criticism I have quoted seems to me to be the proper preface to all serious study of the greatest comic poet of the world. It strikes the true key-note, and tunes our apprehension to the right pitch ; for, in approaching Aristophanes, we must divest our minds of all the ordinary canons and definitions of comedy : we must forget what we have learned from Plautus and Terence, from Molière and Jonson. No modern poet, except perhaps Shakspeare and Calderon in parts, will help us to understand him. We must not expect to find the gist of Aristophanes in vivid portraits of character, in situations borrowed from every-day life, in witty dialogues, in carefully constructed plots arriving at felicitous conclusions. All these elements, indeed, he has ; but these are not the main points of his art. His plays are not comedies in the sense in which we use the word, but scenic allegories, Titanic farces in which the whole creation is turned upside down ; transcendental travesties, enormous orgies of wild fancy and unbridled imagination ; Dionysiac dances in which tears are mingled with laughter, and fire with wine ; Choruses that, underneath their oceanic merriment of leaping waves, hide silent deeps of unstirred thought. If Coleridge was justified in claiming the German word *Lustspiel* for the so-called comedies of Shakspeare, we have a far greater right to appropriate this wide and pregnant title to the plays of Aristophanes. The brazen mask which crowns his theatre smiles indeed broadly, serenely, as if its mirth embraced the universe ; but its hollow eye-sockets suggest infinite possibilities of profoundest irony. Buffoonery carried to the point of paradox, wisdom disguised as insanity,

and gaiety concealing the whole sum of human disappointment, sorrow, and disgust, seem ready to escape from its open but rigid lips, which are moulded to a proud perpetual laughter. It is a laughter which spares neither God nor man—which climbs Olympus only to drag down the Immortals to its scorn, and trails the pall of august humanity in the mire ; but which, amid its mockery and blasphemy, seems everlastingly asserting, as by paradox, that reverence of the soul which bends our knees to Heaven and makes us respect our brothers. There is nothing sinister or even serious in Aristophanes. He did not write in the sarcastic, cynical old age of his nation or his era. He is rather the voice of its superabundant youthfulness : his genius is like a young man, sporting in his scorn of danger with the thought of death ; like Achilles, in the sublimity of his beauty, mimicking the gestures of Thersites. Nor, again, are his thoughts shaded down, concealed, wrapped up in symbols. On the contrary, the very “Weltvernichtungsidee” of which Heine speaks, leaps forth and spreads its wings beneath the full blaze of Athenian noon-day, showing a glorious face, as of sculptured marble, and a comely person unashamed. It is not the morbid manifestation of sour secretions and unnatural juices, but the healthy product of keen vitality and perfectly harmonious functions. Into the clear light his paradoxes, and his irony, and his unblushing satire spring like song-birds rejoicing in their flight.

Then, again, how miraculously beautiful are “the blooming ornament of thoughts,” “the nightingales and climbing apes,” of which we spoke ! No poet—not even Shelley—has exceeded the choruses of the *Birds* and *Clouds* in swiftness, radiance, and condensed imagination. Shakspeare alone, in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Tempest* ; or Calderon, in some of his allegorical dramas, carries us away into the same enchanted land, where the air is purer and the skies seem larger than in our world ; where the stars burn with treble lustre, and where

the flowers harbour visible spirits—elves and Ariels clinging to the branches, and dazzling fireflies tangled in the meadow-grass beneath our feet. Nor is it only by this unearthly splendour of visionary loveliness that Aristophanes attracts us. Beauty of a more mundane and sensual sort is his. Multitudes of brilliant ever-changing figures fill the scene ; and here and there we find a landscape or a piece of music and moonlight glowing with the presence of the vintage god. Bacchic processions of young men and maidens move before us, tossing inspired heads wreathed with jasmine flowers and wet with wine. The Mystæ in the meadows of Elysium dance their rounds with the clash of cymbals and with madly twinkling snow-white feet. We catch glimpses at intervals of Athenian banquets, of midnight serenades, of the palæstra with its crowd of athletes, of the Panathenaic festival as Pheidias carved it, of all the busy rhythmic coloured life of Greece.

The difficulty of treating Aristophanes in an essay is twofold. There are first of all those obstacles which every writer on so old a subject has to meet. Aristophanes, like all Greek poets, has been subjected to prolonged and most minute criticism. He has formed a part of classical education for centuries, and certain views about his poetry, substantially correct, have become a fixed element in our literary consciousness. Thus every fresh writer on the old Comedy of Athens must take a good deal of knowledge for granted in his readers—but what, and how much, he hardly knows. He may expect them to be acquainted with the details furnished by scholars like Donaldson about the times at which comedies were exhibited, the manner of their presentation on the stage, and the change from the old to the middle and new periods. He may suppose that they will know that Aristophanes stood in the same relation to Cratinus as Sophocles to Æschylus ; that the *Clouds* had not so much to do with the condemnation of Socrates as some of the later Greek gossips attempted to make out ; that Aristo-

phanes was Conservative in politics, philosophy, and literature, vehemently opposing the demagogues, the sophists, and Euripides. Again, he may, or rather he must, avoid the ground which has been so well trodden by Schlegel, Müller, and Mitchell, in their familiar criticisms of Aristophanes : and he may content himself with a passing allusion to Grote's discussion of the *Clouds*. But though, from this point of view, Aristophanes is almost stale from having been so much written about and talked about and alluded to—though in fact there is a *primâ facie* obligation imposed on every one who makes his plays the subject of fresh criticism to pretend at least to some originality of view or statement—still Aristophanes has never yet been fairly dealt with or submitted to really dispassionate consideration. Thus he shares in common with all poets of antiquity the disabilities of being hackneyed, while he has the peculiar and private disability of never having been really appreciated at his worth except by a few scholars and enthusiastic poets. The reason for this want of intelligence in the case of Aristophanes is not hard to see. First of all, his plays are very difficult. Their allusions require much learned illustration. Their vocabulary is copious and rare. So that none but accomplished Grecians or devoted students of literature can hope to read him with much pleasure to themselves. In a translation his special excellence is almost unrecognizable. Next—and this is the real reason why Aristophanes has been unfairly dealt with, as well as the source of the second class of difficulties which meet his interpreters—it is hard for the modern Christian world to tolerate his freedom of speech and coarseness. Of all the Greeks, essentially a nude nation, he is the most naked—the most audacious in his revelation of all that human nature is supposed to seek to hide. The repugnance felt for his ironical *insouciance* and for his profound indelicacy has prevented us from properly valuing his poetry. Critics begin their panegyrics of him with apologies ; they lift

their skirts and tread delicately, passing over his broadest humour *sicco pede*, picking their way among his heterogeneous images, winking and blinking, hesitating and condoning, omitting a passage here, attempting to soften an allusion there, until the real Aristophanes has almost disappeared. Yet there is no doubt that this way of dealing with our poet will not do. The time has come at which any writer on Greek literature, if not content to pass by Aristophanes in silence, must view him as he is, and casting aside for a moment at least the veil of modern propriety, must be prepared to admit that this great comic genius was "far too naked to be shamed."

So important is this point in the whole of its bearing upon Aristophanes, that I may perhaps be allowed to explain the peculiar position which he occupies, and, without seeking to offer any exculpation for what offends us in the moral sensibilities of the Greeks, to show how such a product as the Comedy of Aristophanes took root and grew in Athens. His plays, I have already said, are not comedies in the modern sense, but Lustspiele—fantastic entertainments, debauches of the reason and imagination. The poet, when he composed them, knew that he was writing for an audience of Greeks, inebriated with the worship of the vintage god, ivy-crowned, and thrilling to the sound of orgiastic flutes. Therefore, we who read him in the cool shades of modern Protestantism, excited by no Dionysiac rites, forced to mine and quarry at his jests with grammar, lexicon, and commentary, unable, except by the exercise of the historical imagination, to conceive of a whole nation agreeing to honour its god by frantic license, must endeavour to check our natural indignation, and by no means to expect from Aristophanes such views of life as are consistent with our sober mood. We cannot, indeed, exactly apply to the case of Aristophanes those clever sophistries by which Charles Lamb defended the comic poets of our Restoration, when he said that they had created an unreal world, and that, allowing

for their fictitious circumstances, the perverse morality of their plays was not only pardonable but even necessary. Yet it is true that his audacious immodesty forms a part of that *Weltvernichtungs*idee, of that total upturn and Titanic revolution in the universe, which he affects ; and so far we may plead in his defence, and in the defence of the Athenian spectators, that his comedies were consciously exaggerated in their coarseness, and that beyond the limits of the Dionysiac festival their jokes would not have been tolerated. To use a metaphor, his plays were offered as a sacrifice upon the thymelé or orchestral altar of that Bacchus who was sire by Aphrodité of Priapus : this potent deity protected them ; and the poet, as his true and loyal priest, was bound, in return for such protection, to represent the universe at large as conquered by the madness of intoxication, beauty, and desire. Thus the Aristophanic comedies are in one sense a radiant and pompous show, by which the genius of the Greek race chose, as it were in bravado, to celebrate an apotheosis of the animal functions of humanity ; and from this point of view we may fairly accept them as visions, Dionysiac day-dreams, from which the nation woke and rose and went about its business soberly, until the Bacchic flutes were heard again another year.

On the religious origin of Greek Comedy some words may perhaps be reckoned not out of place in this connection. It has frequently been pointed out to what a great extent the character of the Aristophanic Comedy was determined by its sacred nature, and by the peculiar condition of semi-religious license which prevailed at Athens during the celebration of the festival of Bacchus. We know that much is tolerated in a Roman or Venetian carnival which would not be condoned at other seasons of the year. Yet the Italian carnival, in its palmiest days, must have offered but a very poor and frigid picture of what took place in Athens at the Dionysia, nor was the expression of the crudest sensuality ever thought agreeable

to any modern saint. That the Greeks most innocently and simply wished to prove their piety by these excesses is quite clear. Aristophanes himself, in the *Acharnians*, gives us an example of the primitive Phallic Hymn, which formed the nucleus of Comedy in its rudest stage. The refrain of *φαλλῆς, ἐραῖρε Βακχίου, ξύγκωμε, νυκτεροπλάνητε, μοιχέ*, sufficiently indicates its nature. Again the Choruses of the *Mystæ* in the *Frogs* furnish a still more brilliant example of the interminglement of debauchery with a spirit of true piety, of sensual pleasure with pure-souled participation in divine bliss. Their hymns to Iacchus and Demeter alternate between the holiest strains of praise and the most scurrilous satire. At one time they chant the delights of the meadows blooming with the rose; at another they raise cries of jubilant intoxication and fierce frenzy. In the same breath with the utterance of sensual passion, they warn all profane persons and impure livers to avoid their rites, and boast that for them alone the light of heaven is gladsome, who have forsworn impiety and preserved the justice due to friends and strangers. We must imagine that this Phallic ecstasy, if we may so name it, had become, as it were, organized and reduced to system in the Aristophanic Lustspiel. It permeates and gives a flavour to the comic style long after it has been absorbed and superseded by the weightier interests of developed art. This ecstasy implied a profound sympathy with nature in her large and perpetual reproductiveness, a mysterious sense of the sexuality which pulses in all members of the universe and reaches consciousness in man. It encouraged a momentary subordination of the will and intellect and nobler feelings to the animal propensities, prompting the same race which had produced the sculptures of the Parthenon, the tragedies of Æschylus, the deeds of Pericles and Leonidas, the self-control of Socrates, the thought of Plato, to throw aside its royal mantle of supreme humanity, and to proclaim in a gigantic work of art the

irreconcilable incongruity which exists between the physical nature and the spirit of the man, when either side of the antithesis is isolated for exclusive contemplation. We need not here point out how far removed was the Phallic ecstasy from any prurient delight in licentious details, or from the scientific analysis of passions. Nor, on the other hand, need we indicate the vein of a similar extravagant enthusiasm in Oriental poetry. It is enough to remember that it existed latent in all the comic dramas of the earlier period, throbbing through them as the *sève de la jeunesse* palpitates in youthful limbs and adds a glow and glory to the inconsiderate or unseemly acts of an Alcibiades or Antony. Christianity, by introducing a new conception of the physical relations of humanity, by regarding the body as the temple of the spirit, utterly rejected and repudiated this delirium of the senses, this voluntary acceptance of merely animal conditions. Christianity taught mankind, what the Greeks had never learned, that it is our highest duty to be at discord with the universe upon this point. Man, whose subtle nature might be compared to a many-stringed instrument, is bidden to restrain the resonance of those chords which do not thrill in unison with purely spiritual and celestial harmonies. Hence the theories of celibacy and asceticism, and of the sinfulness of carnal pleasure, which are wholly alien to Greek moral and religious notions. Never since the age of Athenian splendour has a rational and highly civilized nation dared to express by any solemn act its sense of union with merely physical nature. Aristophanes is therefore the poet of a past age, the "hierophant of a now unapprehended mystery," the unique remaining example of an almost unlimited genius set apart and consecrated to a cultus which subsequent civilization has determined to annihilate. The only age which offers anything like a parallel to the Athenian era of Aristophanes is that of the Italian Renaissance. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at Venice, Florence, and Rome, it seemed as if the

Phallic ecstasy might possibly revive, as if the animal nature of man might again be deified, in sentiment at least, and as if the highest arts might stoop once more to interpret and to consecrate the poetry of the senses. But the conscience of the world was changed ; and this could no longer be. The image of Christ crowned with thorns had passed across the centuries ; hopes undreamed of by the Greeks had aroused a new spirit in the soul of man, and had forced him in spite of inclination to lift his eyes from earth to heaven. Over the joys of the flesh, which were connected with a future doom of pain unending and disgrace, was shed a hue of gloom and horror. Conception was looked upon as sin : birth as disaster. It was even doubted whether for any but for virgins, except by some special privilege of election, salvation could be hoped. Therefore, while the Greeks had been innocent in their serene unconsciousness of sin or shame, the extravagances of the Renaissance were guilty, turbid, and morbid, because they were committed defiantly, in open reprobacy, in scorn of the acknowledged law. What was at worst bestial in the Greeks has become devilish in the Renaissance. How different from a true Greek is Benvenuto Cellini : how unlike the monsters even of Greek mythic story is Francesco Cenci : how far more awful in his criminality is the Borgia than any despot of Greek colony or island ! I have been somewhat led astray from the point in view, which was to prove that the comedies of Aristophanes embody a peculiar and temporary, though recurring and recognized, phase of Greek feeling—that they owe their license in a great measure to their religious origin, and to the enthusiasm of the Bacchic ecstasy.

But what has just been said about the difference between Athenian Greece and the Italian Renaissance will show that Aristophanes has a still more solid ground of defence in the fact that he was thoroughly in harmony with the moral sense of his age and nation, and that the Bacchic license was only an

exaggeration of more ordinary habits both of thought and action. It must be acknowledged that the Greeks were devoid of what we call shame and delicacy in respect of their bodies. It was only in the extreme old age of the Greek race, and under the dominion of Oriental mysticism, that the Alexandrian Plotinus was heard to exclaim that he blushed because he had a body. The true Greeks, on the contrary, were proud of the body, loved to display their physical perfections, felt no shame of any physical needs, were not degraded by the exercise of any animal function, nay poetized the pleasures of the flesh. Simonides, in his lines on Happiness, prays first for health and next for beauty; and a thousand passages might be quoted to prove how naturally and sincerely the Greeks reckoned physical beauty among the chief goods of life, and how freely they exhibited it in all its splendour. As a slight indication of the popular feeling, we might quote the reproof for effeminacy which Aristophanes utters against the young men who thought it necessary to appear clothed at the Panathenaic festival; from which it is clear that the Greek conscience connected nudity with purity. The immense value attached to physical beauty is evident even from their military history—from the record, for instance, of Callicrates among the heroes of Plataea, simply because he was the fairest of the Greeks who fought that day. Again, Herodotus tells of one Philippus, who joined in the expedition of Dorieus against Eryx, and who being slain and stripped by the people of Segeste, was taken up by his foes and nobly buried, and thereafter worshipped as a hero on account of his exceeding beauty. The influence which the sight of beauty exercised over the gravest of the Greeks is proved by the story of Phryne before the Areopagus, and by what Plato tells of Socrates at the beginning of the *Charmides*. How it could electrify a nation assembled in the theatre, is shown by Plutarch's story of the slave whom Nicias set free for winning the applause of all Athens when

acting Dionysus, and by Xenophon's tale about another Dorieus whom the Athenians, though he was their deadly foe, released ransomless and scatheless, after he had been captured and sent to Attica, because he was a very goodly man. Nor was it the sense of beauty only, or the open exhibition of the person, which marked the Greeks. Besides this, and perhaps flowing from it, we find in them an extraordinary callousness with regard to many things which we think shocking and degrading in the last degree. The mere fact that Alcibiades, while a minister of the Athenian people, could have told the tales of his youth, recorded in Plato's Banquet, or that grave men could have contended without reserve for the favour of distinguished courtesans, proves that the Athenian public was ready to accept whatever Aristophanes might set before them—not to take his jokes scornfully, as a Roman patron trifled with the *facetiae* of his *Græculus esuriens*, but while enjoying them, to respect their author.

Nor is Aristophanes without another solid ground of defence, on the score of sincerity and healthiness. In his immodesty there is nothing morbid, though it is expressed more crudely than suits the moral dignity of man. Aristophanes is never prurient, never in bad taste or vulgar. He has none of the obscenity which revolts us in Swift, who uses filth in order to degrade and violate our feelings; none of the nastiness of Molière or Pope, whose courtly and polished treatment of disgusting subjects is a disgrace to literature; none of the coarseness of Ben Jonson; none of the far more indecent inuendo which contaminates the writings of humorists like Sterne and satirists like Voltaire, who seem always trying, childishly or apishly, to tamper with forbidden things. Aristophanes accepts licentiousness as a fact which needs no apology: he does not, as the moderns do, mingle it with sentiment, or indulge in it on the sly. He has no *polissonnerie*: the *vice égrillard* of the French (from whom we are obliged to borrow these phrases) is

unknown to him. His license is large, serene, sane, statuesque, self-approved. His sensuality is nonchalant and natural—so utterly devoid of shame, so thoroughly at home and well contented with itself, that it has no perturbation, no defiance, no mysterious attractiveness. Besides he is ironical : his ἀπεψωλημένοι and εὐρύπρωκτοι promenade in noonday, and get laughed at, instead of being stoned and hooted down. About the audacious scene between Kinesias and Murrhiné, in the *Lysistrata*, there is no Aretine hircosity. It is merely comic—a farcical incident, selected, not for the rankness of its details, but for its dramatic capabilities. The same may be said about the termination of the *Thesmophoriazusæ* and the scene in the *Ecclesiazusæ*, which so vividly illustrates the working of one law in the new commonwealth. So innocent in his unconsciousness is Aristophanes, that he rarely condescends even to satirize the sensual vices. The lines about Aripgrades in the *Knights*, however, are an instance of his having done this with more than the pungency of Martial, and it must be admitted that his pictures of the drunkenness and incontinence of the Athenian women have something Swiftish in their brutal sarcasm. If we are to seek for an approximation to Aristophanic humour, we shall find it perhaps in Rabelais. Rabelais exhibits a similar disregard for decency, combining the same depth of purpose and largeness of insight with the same coarse fun. But in Aristophanes there is nothing quite grotesque and homely, whereas Rabelais is full of these qualities. Even the opening of the *Peace*, fantastic as it is in absurdity, does not touch the note of grossness peculiar to French Pantagruelism. Aristophanes is always Greek, while Rabelais inherits the mediæval spirit. In reading Aristophanes we seem to have the serene skies of Attica above our heads ; the columns of the Propylæa and the Parthenon look down on us ; noble shapes of youths and maidens are crowding sacred marble steps ; below, upon the mirror of the sea, shine Salamis and Ægina ; and far off, in hazy distance, rise Peloponne-

sian hills. With these pictures of the fancy his comedy harmonizes. But Rabelais carries us away to Gothic courts and monkish libraries: we fill his margin with etchings in the style of Gustave Doré. What has been said of Rabelais applies with even greater force to Hogarth, whose absolute sincerity is as great as that of Aristophanes, but who is never light and careless. His coarseness is the product of a coarse nature, of coarse manners, of a period of national coarseness. We tolerate it because of the moral earnestness beneath: the artist is striving diligently to teach us by warning us of vice. This is hardly ever the case with Aristophanes. When he is coarse, we pardon him for very different reasons. In his wilful degradation of humanity to the level of animals we recognize a portion of the Weltvernichtungsidee. In the intellectual arrogance of the Athenian prime a poet could afford thus to turn the world upside down. But those who cannot subscribe to the following dictum of Taine, which is very applicable to Aristophanes,—“Elevées à cette énormité et savourées avec cette insouciance, les fonctions corporelles deviennent poétiques”—those who

“Wink and shut their apprehension up
From common sense of what men were and are,
Who would not know what men must be”—

will need to “hurry amain” from the masque of moral anarchy which the great comedian displays. With these remarks I may finally dismiss what has to be said about the chief disability under which Aristophanes labours as a poet.*

For the enjoyment of Aristophanic fun a sort of southern childishness and swiftness of gleeful apprehension is required.

* Since this chapter was written, Mr. Browning's interesting piece of criticism in verse, *Aristophanes' Apology*, containing a most clever caricature of Aristophanes, and a no less clever defence of Euripides, has appeared. I do not see any reason to alter the view expressed above concerning Greek Comedy.

It does not shine so much in its pure wit as in its overflowing humour and in the inexhaustible fertility of ludicrous devices by which laughter is excited. The ascent of Trugaïos to heaven upon the dung-beetle's back, and the hauling of Peace from her well in the *Eirene*, or the wine-skin dressed up like a baby in the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, may be mentioned as instances of this broad but somewhat peculiar drollery. Burlesquing the gods was always a capital resource of the comic poets. If we in the nineteenth century can find any amusement whatever in Byron's or Burnand's travesties of Olympus, how exquisitely absurd to an Athenian mob must have been the figures of Prometheus under an umbrella, Heracles the glutton, Hermes and Æacus the household slaves, Bacchus the young fop, and Iris the soubrette. The puns of Aristophanes for the most part are very bad, but the parodies are excellent. Then the surprises (*παρα προσδοκίαν*), both of language and of incident, with which his comedies abound, the broad and genial caricatures which are so largely traced and carried out in detail with such force, the brilliant descriptions of familiar things seen from odd or unexpected points of view, and lastly the enormous quantity of mirth-producing matter which the poet squanders with the prodigality of conscious omnipotence, all contribute to heighten the comic effect of Aristophanes. Perhaps the most intelligible piece of fun, in the modern sense of the word, is the last scene in the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, which owes its effect to parody and caricature more than to allusions which are hard to seize. A great deal of the fun of Aristophanes must have depended upon local and personal peculiarities which we cannot understand: the constant references to the effeminate Cleisthenes, the skin-flint Pauson, miserly Patrocles, cowardly Cleonymus, Exceestides the alien, Agyrrhius the upstart, make us yawn because we cannot catch the exact point of the jests against them. Indeed, as Schlegel has said, "we may boldly affirm that, notwithstanding all the explanations which have come

down to us—notwithstanding the accumulation of learning which has been spent upon it, one half of the wit of Aristophanes is altogether lost to the moderns.”

Having dismissed these preliminary considerations, we may now ask what has caused the comedy of Aristophanes to triumph over the obstacles to its acceptance. Why have his plays been transmitted to posterity when those of Eupolis and Cratinus have perished, and when only scattered lines from the eight hundred comedies of the middle period read by Athenæus have survived destruction? No one has asked of Aristophanes the question which the Alexandrian critic put to Menander: “Oh, Nature and Menander, which of you copied the other?” Yet Menander is scarcely more to us than the memory of a departed greatness,* or at best an echo sounding somewhat faintly from the Roman theatre, while Aristophanes survives among the most highly cherished monuments of antiquity. The answer to this question is, no doubt, that Aristophanes was more worth preservation than his predecessors or successors. It is wiser to have confidence in the ultimate good taste and conservative instinct of humanity, than to accept Bacon’s half-ironical, half-irritable saying, that the stream of time lets every solid substance sink, and carries down the froth and scum upon its surface. As far, at least, as it is possible to form a judgment, we may be pretty certain that in the province of the highest art and of the deepest thought we possess the greater portion of those works which the ancients themselves prized highly; indeed, we may conjecture that had the great libraries of Alexandria and Byzantium been transmitted to us entire, the pure metal would not very greatly have exceeded in bulk what we now possess, but would have been buried beneath masses of inferior matter from which centuries would have

* See my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets*, chap. x., for an estimate of Menander, together with the other playwrights of the Middle and New Comedy.

scarcely sufficed to disengage it. Aristophanes was preserved in his integrity, we need not doubt, because he shone forth as a *poet* transcendent for his splendour even among the most brilliant of Attic playwrights. Cratinus may have equalled or surpassed him in keen satire : Eupolis may have rivalled him in exquisite artistic structure ; but Aristophanes must have eclipsed them, not merely by uniting their qualities successfully, but also by the exhibition of some diviner faculty, some higher spiritual afflatus. If we analyze his art, we find that he combines the breadth of humour, which I have already sought to characterize, with the utmost versatility and force of intellect, with the power of grasping his subjects under all their bearings, with extraordinary depth of masculine good sense, with inexhaustible argumentative resources, and with a marvellous hold on personalities. Yet all these qualities, essential to a comic poet who pretended also to be the public censor of politics and morals, would not have sufficed to immortalize him had he not been essentially a poet—a poet in what we are apt to call the modern sense of the word—a poet, that is to say, endowed with original intuitions into nature, and with the faculty of presenting to our minds the most varied thoughts and feelings in language uniformly beautiful, as the creatures of an exuberant and self-swayed fancy. Aristophanes is a poet as Shelley, or Ariosto, or Shakspeare, is a poet, far more than as Sophocles, or Pindar, or Lucretius is a poet. In spite of his profound art, we seem to hear him uttering “his native wood notes wild.” The subordination of the fancy to the fixed aims of the reason, which characterizes classical poetry, is not at first sight striking in Aristophanes ; but he splendidly exhibits the wealth, luxuriance, variety, and subtlety of the fancy working with the reason, and sometimes superseding it, which we recognize in the greatest modern poets. If we seek to define the peculiar qualities of his poetic power, we are led to results not easily expressed, because all general critical conclusions are barren

and devoid of force when worded, but which may perhaps be stated and accepted as the text for future illustration.

The poetry of Aristophanes is always swift and splendid. We watch its brilliant course as we might watch the flight of a strong rapid bird, whose plumage glitters by moments in the light of the sun ; for, to insist upon the metaphor, the dazzling radiance of his fancy only shines at intervals, capriciously, with fitful flashes, coruscating suddenly and dying out again. It is as if the neck alone and a portion of the feathers of the soaring bird were flecked with gold and crimson grain, so that a turn of the body or a fluttering of the pinions is enough to bring the partial splendour into light or cast it into shadow. Aristophanes passes by abrupt transitions from the coarsest or most simply witty dialogue to passages of pure and plaintive song ; he quits his fiercest satire for refreshing strains of lark-like heaven-aspiring melody. These again he interrupts with sudden ruthlessness, breaking the melody in the middle of a bar, and dropping the unfinished stanza. He seems shy of giving his poetic impulse free rein, and prefers to tantalize* us with imperfect specimens of what he might achieve ; so that his splendour is like that of northern streamers in its lambency, though swift and piercing as forked lightnings in its intensity. Even his most impassioned and sustained flights of imagination are broken by digressions into satire, fantastic merriment, or parody, by which the more dull-witted Athenians must have been sorely puzzled in their inability to decide on the serious or playful purpose of the poet. Perhaps the most splendid passages of true poetry in Aristophanes are the Choruses of the initiated in the *Frogs*, the Chorus of the Clouds before they

* As a minor instance of these sudden transitions from the touching to the absurd, take Charon's speech (*Frogs*, 185) :—

τίς εἰς ἀναπαύλας ἐκ κακῶν καὶ πραγμάτων ;
 τίς εἰς τὸ Λήθης πεδίον, ἥ 'ς ὕνου πόδας,
 ἥ 'ς κερβερίου, ἥ 'ς κόρακας, ἥ 'πι Τάλναρον ;

appear upon the stage, the invitation to the nightingale, and the parabasis of the Birds, the speech of Dikaïos Logos in the *Clouds*, some of the praises of rustic life in the *Peace*, the serenade (notwithstanding its coarse satire) in the *Ecclesiazusæ*, and the songs of Spartan and Athenian maidens in the *Lysistrata*. The charm of these marvellous lyrical episodes consists of their perfect simplicity and freedom. They seem to be poured forth as "profuse strains of unpremeditated art" from the fulness of the poet's soul. Their language is elastic, changeful, finely-tempered, fitting the delicate thought like a veil of woven air. It has no Pindaric involution, no Æschylean pompousness, no studied Sophoclean subtlety, no Euripidean *conceits*. It is always bright and Attic, sparkling like the many-twinkling laughter of the breezy sea, or like the light of morning upon rain-washed olive-branches. But this poetry is never very deep or passionate. It cannot stir us with the intensity of Sappho, with the fire and madness of the highest inspiration. Indeed, the conditions of comedy precluded Aristophanes, even had he desired it, which we have no reason to suspect, from attempting the more august movements of lyric poetry. The peculiar glories of his style are its untutored beauties, the improvised perfection and unerring exactitude of natural expression, for which it is unparalleled by that of any other Greek poet. In her most delightful moments the muse of Aristophanes suggests an almost plaintive pathos, as if behind the comic mask there were a thinking, feeling human soul, as if the very uproar of the Bacchic merriment implied some afterthought of sadness.

A detailed examination of the structure of the comedies would be the best illustration of these remarks. At present it will be enough to bring forward two examples of the tender melodies which may at times be overheard in pauses of the wild Aristophanic symphony. The first of these is the well-known Welcome to the Nightingale, sung by the Chorus before their Parabasis:—

ὦ φίλη, ὦ ξουθή, ὦ
 φίλτατον ὀρνέων,
 πάντων ξύννομε τῶν ἐμῶν
 ὕμνων ξύντροφ' ἀηδοῖ;
 ἦλθες, ἦλθες, ὤφθης,
 ἥδ' ὦν φθόγγον ἐμοὶ φέρουσ';
 ἀλλ' ὦ καλλιβόαν κρέκουσ'
 αὐλὸν φθέγμασιν ἡρινοῖς,
 ἄρχου τῶν ἀναπαίστων.

With what a fluent caressing fulness one word succeeds another here! How each expresses love and joy! Remember, too, that all the birds are singing together, and that the wild throat of their playfellow, the nightingale, is ready to return the welcome with its throbbing song of Maytime and young summer. Take another poetic touch, brief and unobtrusive, yet painting a perfect picture with few strokes, and transfusing it with the spirit of the scene imagined:—

ἀλλ' ἀναμνησθέντες, ὦνδρες,
 τῆς διαίτης τῆς παλαιᾶς,
 ἣν παρεῖχ' αὐτῇ ποθ' ἡμῖν,
 τῶν τε παλασίων ἐκείνων,
 τῶν τε σύκων, τῶν τε μύρτων,
 τῆς τρυγός τε τῆς γλυκείας,
 τῆς ἰωνιάς τε τῆς πρὸς τῷ φρέατι,
 τῶν τε ἐλαῶν, ὧν ποθοῦμεν—

“The violet-bed beside the well, and the olives which we long to see again.” Trugaïos is reminding his fellow-villagers of the pleasures of peace and of their country life. Those who from their recollection of southern scenery can summon up the picture, who know how cool and shady are those wells, mirroring maiden-hair in their black depth; how fragrant and dewy are the beds of tangled violets, how dreamy are the olive-trees, ærial, mistlike, robed with light, will understand the peculiar *πόθος* of these lines.

But we must not dwell too much upon the glimpses of pathetic poetry in Aristophanes, which after all are but few and

far between, mere swallow-flights of song, when compared with the serious business of his art. It is well known that the old comedy of the Athenians performed the function of a public censorship. Starting from the primitive comic song, in which a rude Fescennine license of what we now call "chaffing" was allowed, and tempering its rustic jocularly with the caustic bitterness of Archilochian satire, comedy became an instrument for holding up to public ridicule all things of general interest. Persons and institutions, nay, the gods themselves, are freely laughed at. Bacchus seems to have enjoyed the jokes even when directed against himself: *καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἴσως χαίρει φιλόγελως τις ὧν* are the words of Lucian. So no one else had a right to resent the poet's merriment when the presiding god of the festival approved of sarcasms against his deity, and trod his own stage as a cowardly effeminate young profligate. This being the more serious aim of comedy, it followed that Aristophanes always had some satiric, and in so far didactic purpose, underlying his extravagant caricatures. What that purpose was, is too well known to need more than passing mention. From his earliest appearance under the name of Callistratus, to the last of his victories, Aristophanes maintained his character as an Athenian Conservative. He came forward uniformly as a panegyrist of the old policy of Athens, and a vehement antagonist of the new direction taken by his nation subsequently to the Persian war. This one theme he varied, according to circumstances and convenience. In the first of his plays—the *Daitaleis*, he attacked the profligacy and immodesty of the rising generation, who neglected their Homer for the lessons of the Sophists, and engaged in legal quarrels. The *Acharnians*, the *Peace*, and the *Lysistrata* are devoted to impressing on the Athenians the advantages of peace, and inducing them to lay aside their enmity against Sparta. In the *Knights*, the Demagogues are attacked through the person of Cleon, with a violence of concentrated passion

that surpasses the most savage onslaughts of Archilochus. The *Clouds* and *Wasps* exhibit different pictures of the insane passion for litigation and the dishonest arts of rhetoric which prevailed at Athens, fostered partly by the influence of Sophists who professed to teach a profitable method of public speaking, and partly by the flattery of the demagogues. The *Birds* is a fantastic satire upon the Athenian habit of building castles in the air, and indulging in extravagant dreams of conquest. In the *Ecclesiazusæ* Aristophanes seems bent on ridiculing the visionary Utopias of political theorists like Plato, and also on caricaturing the social license which prevailed in Athens, where everything, as he complains, had been tried, except for women to appear in public like the men. In the *Thesmophoriazusæ* and the *Frogs* we exchange politics for literature ; but in his treatment of the latter subject, Aristophanes exhibits the same conservative spirit. His hostility against Euripides, which is almost as bitter as his hatred of Cleon, is founded upon the sophistical nature of his art. Indeed, the Demagogues, the Sophists, and Euripides were looked upon by him as three forms of the same poison which was corrupting the old ἥθος of his nation. We have now indicated the serious intention of all the plays of Aristophanes, except the *Plutus*, which is an ethical allegory conceived under a different inspiration from that which gave the impulse to his other creative acts. Yet it must not be forgotten that the subject matter of these plays is often varied : in the *Acharnians*, for example, we have a specimen of literary criticism, while the *Lysistrata* is aimed as much at the follies of women as intended to set forth the advantages of peace. We must also remember that it was the poet's purpose to keep his serious ground-plan concealed. His Comedy had to be the direct antithesis to Greek Tragedy. If it taught, it was to teach by paradox. In this respect, Aristophanes realised a very high ideal. Preach as he may be doing in reality, and underneath his merriment, there is hardly

a passage in all his plays, if we except the pleadings of Dikaïos Logos in the *Clouds*, and the personal portions of the Parabases, in which we catch him revealing his own earnestness. Every ordinary point of view is so consistently ignored, and all the common relations of things are so thoroughly reversed, that the topsy-turvy Chaos which a play of Aristophanes presents, is quite harmonious. It is, in fact, madness methodized and with a sober meaning. Perhaps we ought to seek in this consideration the key to those problems which have occupied historians when dealing with the Aristophanic criticism of Socrates. How, it is always asked, could Aristophanes have been so consciously unjust to the great moralist of Athens? If we keep in sight the intentional absurdity of everything in one of the Aristophanic comedies, we may perhaps understand how it was possible for the poet to travesty the friend with whom he conversed familiarly at supper parties. That Plato understood the ridicule of his great master from some such point of view as this, is clear from his express recommendation of the *Clouds* to Dionysius, from the portrait which he draws of Aristophanes in the *Symposium*, and from the eulogistic epigram (if that is genuine) which he composed upon him. It is curious as a parallel, that Agathon should have been even more ignobly caricatured than Socrates at the beginning of the *Thesmophoriazusæ*; yet we know from his own lips, as well as from the dialogue of Plato, that Aristophanes was a friend of the tragic poet, for he elsewhere calls him

ἀγαθὸς ποιητὴς καὶ ποθεινὸς τοῖς φίλοις.

The lash applied to Socrates and Agathon is scarcely less stinging than that applied to Cleon and Euripides. Yet the fact remains, that Aristophanes was the friend of Agathon, and a member of the Socratic circle. Much of the obscurity attending the interpretation of the *Clouds* arises from our

having lost the finer *nuances* of Athenian feeling respecting the persons satirized in the old Comedy. *We* do not, for example, understand Cratinus when he joins the name of Euripides with that of his great satirist in one epithet descriptive of the quibbling style of the day—*εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζειν*.* But to return from this digression, we may observe that it was only in a democracy that an institution unsparing of friend and foe, like the old Comedy, in which persons were openly exposed to censure and the solemn acts of the government were called in question, could be tolerated. Accordingly we find that the early development of Comedy, after the date of Susarion, was checked by the accession of Pisistratus to power, and that the old Comedy itself perished with the extinction of Athenian liberty. It is only a democracy that likes to criticise itself, that takes pride in its indifference to ridicule, and in its readiness to acknowledge its own errors. In this respect, we English are very democratic: we abuse ourselves and expose our own follies more than any other nation; the press and the platform do for us in a barren, unæsthetic fashion, what Aristophanes did for the Athenian public.

Perhaps we may now be able to see that a middle course must be followed between the extremes of regarding Aristophanes as an indecent parasite pandering to the worst inclinations of the Athenian rabble, and of looking upon him as a profound philosopher and sober patriot. The former view is maintained by Grote, who, though he is somewhat hampered by his pronounced championship of all the democratic institutions of Athens, among which the Comedy of Aristophanes must needs be reckoned, yet clearly thinks that the poet was

* This epithet contains the gist of the objection often brought against Aristophanes, that he assisted the demoralization which he denounced. If he did so, it was not by his grossness and indelicacy, but by his subtilty and refinement and audacity of universal criticism. The sceptical aquafortis of his age is as strong in Aristophanes as in Euripides.

a meddling monkey, full indeed of genius, but injurious to the order of the State, and to the peace of private persons. The latter has been advocated by the German scholars, Ranke, Bergk, and Meineke, against whom Grote has directed an able and conclusive argument in the notes to his eighth volume. Truly, it is absurd to pretend that Aristophanes was the prudent and far-seeing moralist described by his German admirers. To imagine him thus, would be to falsify the whole purpose of the Athenian Comic Drama, and to test its large extravagance by the narrow standard of modern morality. We might as well fancy that Alexander was an unselfish worker in the service of humanity, as bring ourselves to see in Aristophanes the sage of uniformly staid sobriety. Not to mention that such a notion is at total variance with the only authentic portrait we possess of him, in the *Symposium* of Plato, every line of his Comedies cries out against so pedantic and priggish a calumny. For it is a calumny thus to misrepresent the high-spirited muse of Aristophanes, with her dishevelled hair and Coan robe of flimsiest gauze, and wild eyes swimming in the mists of wine. She never pretends to be better than a priestess of the midnight Bacchus and Corinthian Aphrodite, though she believes sincerely in the inspiration of these deities. To see in her a Vestal or a Diotima, to set the owl of Pallas on her shoulder, and to strap the ægis round her panting breasts is a piece of elaborate stupidity and painful impertinence, which it remained for German pedagogues to perpetrate. Yet it is equally wrong to think of Aristophanes merely as a pernicious calumniator, who killed Socrates, and put an ineffectual spoke in the wheel of Progress. Granted that he was more of a Merry-Andrew than a moralist, more of a γελωτοποιός than a μετεωρολόσσης, we must surely be blind if we fail to recognise the deep undernote of good sense and wisdom which gives eternal value to his jests—worse than blind if we do not honour him for valiant and unflinching service in the cause which he

had recognized as right. Nor are the enemies of Aristophanes less insensible to his real merits as an artist, than his ponderous German friends. What are we to think of the imaginative faculties of a man, who after gazing upon the divine splendours of the genius of Aristophanes, after tracking the erratic flight of this most radiant poet, "with his singing robes about him," can descend to earth and wish that he had never existed, or shake his head and measure him by the moral standards of Quarterly Reviews and British respectability? Alas, that from the modern world should have evanesced all appreciation of Art that is not obviously useful, palpably didactic! If we would rightly estimate Aristophanic Comedy, we must be prepared to accept it in the classical spirit, and separating ourselves from either sect of the Pharisees, refuse to picture its great poets to ourselves, on the one hand as patriots *eximia morum gravitate*, or on the other, as foul slanderers and irreverent buffoons. Far beyond and outside the plane of either standing-ground are they. The old Comedy of Athens is a work of art so tempered and so balanced, that he who would appreciate it must submit, for a moment at least, to forego his modern advantages of improved morality, and public decency, and purer taste, and parliamentary courtesy, and to become—if he can bend his moral back to that obliquity—a "Merry Greek."

It is now clear that Aristophanic Comedy is in the history of Art unique—the product of peculiar and unrepeatable circumstances. The essential differences between it and modern Comedy are manifold. Modern Comedy partakes of the Tragic spirit; it has a serious purpose, acknowledged by the poet; a lesson is generally taught in its catastrophe; it is fond of poetical justice. Aristophanic Comedy, as we have seen, whatever may be its purpose, is always ludicrous to the spectators and to itself. *Tartuffe*, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, and *Volpone*, are tragedies without bloodshed: you only laugh

at them incidentally. The *Clouds*, the *Knights*, and the *Frogs* excite inevitable laughter. Nor is this difference manifest only in the matter and spirit of the two Comedies : it expresses itself externally in their several forms. The plays of Aristophanes, upon the stage, must have been like our Pantomimes, or rather, like our Operas. If we wish to form a tolerable notion of the appearance of an Aristophanic Comedy, we cannot do better than keep in mind the *Flauto Magico* of Mozart. Had Mozart received a good translation of the *Birds* instead of the wretched libretto of the *Zauberflöte*, what a really magic drama he might have produced ! Even as it is, with the miserable materials he had to work upon, the master musician has given us an Aristophanic specimen of the ludicrous passing by abrupt but delicate transitions to the serious, of Parody and Irony playing in and out at hide and seek, of Pathos lurking beneath Merriment, and of Madness leaping by a bound into the regions of Pure Reason. And this he has achieved by the all-subduing witchery of music—by melodies which solve the stiffest contradictions, by the ebb and flow of measured sound rocking upon its surface the most varied thoughts and feelings of the soul of man. In the *Zauberflöte* we are never surprised by any change, however sudden—by any incident, however whimsical. After first lamenting over the stupidity of the libretto, and then resigning ourselves to the caprices of the fairy story, we are delighted to follow the wanderings of Music through her labyrinth of quaint and contradictory absurdities. Just so, we fancy, must have been the case with Aristophanes. Peisthetærus and Euelpides were not more discordant than Papageno ; the *Birds* had their language as *Astrifiammante* has hers ; nor were the deeper tones of Aristophanic meaning more out of place than the bass notes of Sarastro, and the choruses of his attendant priests. Music, which has harmonized the small and trivial contradictions of the *Zauberflöte*, harmonized the vast and profound contradictions

of Aristophanic Comedy. It was the melodramatic setting of such plays as the *Birds* and the *Clouds* which caused their Weltvernichtungsidee to blossom forth melodiously into the magic tree, with all its blossoms and nightingales and merry apes, to which I have so often referred.

With this parallel between the *Birds* and an opera like the *Zauberflöte* in our minds, we may place ourselves among the thirty thousand Athenian spectators assembled in the theatre about the end of March, 414 B.C. We must remember that the great expedition had recently gone forth to Sicily. It was only in the preceding year that the Salaminian galley had been sent for Alcibiades, who had escaped to Sparta, where he was now engaged in stirring up evil for his countrymen. But as yet no disaster had befallen the army of invasion. Gylippus had not arrived. Lamachus was still alive. Every vessel brought news to the Athenians of the speed with which their forces were carrying on the work of circumvallation, and of the despondency of the Syracusans. The spectators of the plays of Aristophanes and Ameipsias were nearly the same persons who had listened to the honeyed eloquence of Alcibiades persuading them to undertake the expedition, and promising them not merely the supremacy of Hellas, but the empire of the Mediterranean and the subjugation of Carthage. Alcibiades, indeed, had turned a traitor to his country; but the charm of his oratory and the spirit he had roused remained. Each father in the audience might fairly hope that his son would share in raising Athens to her height of splendour: not a man but felt puffed up with insolent prosperity. The only warning voice which spoke while Athens trembled on the very razor-edge of fortune, was that of Aristophanes—but with how sweet and delicate a satire, with sarcasms that had the sound of flattery, with prognostications of failure that wore the shape of realized ambitions, with musical banter and multitudinous jests that seemed to apologize for folly rather than to censure it! There is no doubt but that

Aristophanes intended in the *Birds* to ridicule the ambition of the Athenians and their inveterate gullibility. Peisthetærus and Euelpides represent in comic caricature the projectors, agitators, schemers, flatterers, who, led by Alcibiades, had imposed upon the excitable vanity of the nation. Cloudcuckootown is any castle in the air or South Sea Bubble, which might take the fancy of the Athenian mob. But it is also more especially the project of Western dominion connected with their scheme of Sicilian conquest. Aristophanes has treated his theme so poetically and largely, that the interests of the *Birds* is not, like that of the *Wasps* or the *Knights*, almost wholly confined to the Athens of his day. It transcends those limitations of place and time, and is the everlasting allegory of foolish schemes and flimsy ambition. A modern dramatist—Ben Jonson or Molière for instance, perhaps even Shakspeare—could hardly have refrained from ending the allegory with some piece of poetical justice. We should have seen Peisthetærus disgraced and Cloudcuckootown resolved into “such stuff as dreams are made of.” But this is not the art of Aristophanes. He brings Peisthetærus to a successful catastrophe, and ends his Comedy with marriage songs of triumph. Yet none the less pointed is the satire. The unreality of the vision is carefully maintained, and Peisthetærus walking home with Basileia for his bride, like some new sun-eclipsing star, seems to wink and strut and shrug his shoulders, conscious of the Titanic sham.

To analyze in detail a work of art so well known to all students as the *Birds* would be needless. It is enough to notice in passing that it is quite unique of its kind, combining as it does such airy fancies as we find in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* with the peculiar pungency of Aristophanic satire, untainted by the obscenity which forms an integral part of the *Ecclesiastusæ* or *Lysistrata*. Most exquisite is the art with which Aristophanes has collected all the facts of ornithology, all the legends and folk-lore connected with birds, so

as to create a fanciful birdland and atmosphere of true bird life for his imaginary beings. Not less wonderful is the imagination with which he has conceived the whole universe from the bird's point of view, his sympathy with the nightingale, the drollery of his running footman Trochilus, the pompous gravity of his King Epops, and so on through the whole of his winged *dramatis personæ*. The triumph of his art is the Parabasis, in which the birds pour forth melodious compassion for the transitory earth-born creatures of an hour. Poor men, with their little groping lives! The epithets of pity which the happier birds invent to describe man, are woven as it were of gossamer and dew, symbols of fragility. Then the music changes as the vision of winged Erôs, upsoaring from the primeval wind-egg, bursts upon the fancy of the chorus. Again it subsides into still more delicate irony, when the just reign of the birds on earth and over heaven is prophesied; and the whole concludes with semi-chorus answering to semi-chorus in antiphonal strains of woodland poetry and satire—the sweet notes of the flute responded to by shouts of Bacchic laughter.

We have seen in dealing with the *Birds* how Aristophanes converted the whole world into a transcendental birdland, and filled his play with airy shapes and frail imaginings. This power of alchemizing and transmuting everything he touches into the substance of his thought of the moment, is no less remarkable in the comedy of the *Clouds*. And here we are able to mark the peculiar nature of his allegory more clearly than in the choruses of the *Birds*, with greater accuracy to distinguish the play of pure poetry alternating with satire, to trace the glittering thread of fancy drawn athwart the more fantastic arabesque of comic caricature. In the *Clouds* Aristophanes ridicules the rising school of teachers who professed to train the youth of Athens in the arts of public speaking and successful litigation. He aims at the tribe of sophists, who substituted logical discussion for the old æsthetic education of

the Greeks, and who sought to replace mythological religion by meteorological explanations of natural phenomena. The pedantry of this dialectic in its boyhood offended the artistic sense of a conservative like Aristophanes : the priggishness of upstart science had the air to him of insolent irreligion. Besides, he saw that this new philosophy, while it undermined the *ἥθος* of his nation, was capable of lending itself to ignoble ends—that its possessors sought to make money, that their disciples were eager to acquire mere technical proficiency, in order to cut a fine figure in public and to gain their selfish purposes. The sophists professed two chief subjects, τὰ μετέωρα, or the science of natural phenomena ; and rhetoric, or the art of conquering by argument. Aristophanes, in the *Clouds*, satirizes both under the form of allegory by bringing upon the stage his chorus of Clouds, who, in their changeful shapes—heaven-obscuring, appearing variously to various eyes, coming into being from the nothing of the air, and passing away again by imperceptible dissolution, usurping upon the functions of Zeus in the thunder and the rain, hurrying hither and thither at the will of no divine force, but impelled by the newly discovered abstraction Vortex—are the very forms and symbols of the airy, misty Proteus of verbal falseness and intangible irreligion which had begun to possess the Athenians. In order to understand the force of this allegory, we must remember the part which the clouds played in the still vital mythology of the Greeks. It was by a cloud that Hera in her divine scorn had deluded the impious desires of Ixion, who, embracing hollow shapes of vapour, begat Centaurs. The rebellious giants who sought to climb Olympus, were forms of mist and tempest invading the serenity of highest heaven : this Strepsiades indicates when he quotes the words *πλοκάμους θ' ἑκατογκεφάλα Τυφῶ* as referring to the clouds. It was in cloudy vision that gods appeared to mortals, or escaped their sight ; in cloud that the Homeric heroes were snatched from death by their Olympian patrons ;

in clouds that Æolus dwelt and Danaë was prisoned. The Harpies were wind-tossed films of frothy cloud ; the Sirens daughters of foam and mist. Everything that deceived and concealed, that shifted and eluded, that stole away "the enchanted gazer's mind," all Maya or delusion, all fascination and unrealizable desire, was symbolized by clouds. Nor was it without meaning that the clouds ascended from ocean, from the wily parent of wave and storm, the inscrutable hoarder of secrets locked within the caverns of the murmuring deep, who might never be taken in any one clear form, who loved to cozen and betray, whose anger was swift and fretful against such as caught him in their toils. The clouds were his daughters, and so was Aphrodite—beautiful, deceitful, soul-subduing—these his offspring of the air, this his child of the foam—these pouring glamour on the eyes of men, this folding their hearts in snares. Without being fanciful, we might follow this analysis through a hundred labyrinths, all tending to show how exquisite to the apprehension of a Greek steeped in mythological associations must have been the allegory of the clouds. We might, moreover, have pointed out the care of Aristophanes to maintain this mythological propriety. Even in the Parabasis, for instance, where the chorus comes forward in its human character as the representative of the poet, there occurs a semi-choric strain of great beauty, hymning the elemental deities of Sun, Air, Ocean, and all-covering Heaven, who are the parents and especial patrons of the clouds ; for the Sun begets them from the fountains of the Sea, the Air receives and gives them shape as they drift through her yielding realm, and the great Zeus of the sky compels them to his service, stores them with his thunder, and makes a palace for them in his adamant home, and wreathes their dances round his footstool of the firmament. But it is enough to have pointed out the main features of the allegory. The scope which it afforded for the display of splendid poetry was of course immense. From the first moment of the appear-

ance of the chorus to the end we never lose sight of their cloudy splendour, and, as in the case of the *Birds*, every thought, playful or imaginative, which can be conceived relating to the world of clouds, is pressed by Aristophanes into his service.

Early in the play the fount of poetry which they suggest, springs pure and clear from the flinty rock of previous satire. Socrates, who has just been displayed to us as the insignificant anatomizer of fleas and gnats, rises suddenly to this height in his invocation :—

“ O Sovereign King, immeasurable Air, who keepest the earth balanced, and blazing Ether, and sublime goddesses, ye Clouds of lightning and of thunder, arise, appear, dread queens, in mid-air to your Thinker ! ”

It is only in the last word, notice, that the comic smile breaks out.

“ Come, then, ye reverend Clouds, honour this neophyte with your dread beauty ! whether upon Olympus’ holy snow-swept peaks ye sit, or in the gardens of father Ocean weave the dance with nymphs, or in golden pitchers draw the waters of Nile, or in Mæotis bide, or on the white eyries of Mimas : listen, receive our sacrifice, be gracious to our rites.”

With what radiance of imagination the haunts of the clouds are here enumerated ! Sometimes we see them floating in virginal processions above unfooted snows, sometimes enthroned like queens in solemn silence on aerial watch-towers, sometimes dissolved in dew far down among the Oceanides, or brooding, filmy vapours, on the face of broad untroubled lakes.

Aristophanes, it may be said in passing, never dwells upon the more tempestuous functions of the clouds as stormy and angry powers : that would be to violate his allegory, which must always show them deceitfully beautiful, spreading illusion over earth and sky.

In answer to the invitation of Socrates, the Clouds are heard

behind the stage chanting a choric hymn ; * and here it must be remarked that the poet has revealed subtle instinct, for before exhibiting his Chorus, arrayed in veils of filmy gauze, to the people, by which he might have risked the possibility of exciting ludicrous instead of solemn ideas, he enlists the imagination of the audience by a sublime strain of preparatory music, vocally realizing the splendour of the coming Clouds before they strike the eyes of the spectators.

It is to the repeated roll of distant thunder that they sing their untranslatable entrance hymn. Behold them rising, silent domes and pinnacles and towers, from the burnished mirror of the noonday sea : how the sunlight flashes on their pearly slopes and fills their deeply-cloven valleys : how dewy bright and glistening they are ! Then watch them scale the vault of heaven, quitting the horizon with its mists, marching in tranquil state across the spaces of blue ether, gliding to their thrones among the mountain pines ! There they repose, and at their feet is heard the clamour of the streams, the deep rebounding boom of sea waves ; but they are seated in serenity, and below them lies the champaign with its fruits of holy earth, and on their broad immortal marble fronts the unwearied light of the sun-god plays. From their girdles to their sandals falls

* ἀέναοι Νεφέλαι,
 ἀρθῶμεν φανεραὶ δροσερὰν φύσιν εὐάγητον,
 πατρὸς ἀπ' Ὀκεανοῦ βαρυαχέος
 ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων κορυφὰς ἐπὶ
 δενδροκόμους, ἵνα
 τηλεφανεῖς σκοπιᾶς ἀφορώμεθα,
 καρπούς τ' ἄρδομέναν ἱερὰν χθόνα,
 καὶ ποταμῶν ζαθέων κελαδήματα,
 καὶ πόντον κελάδοντα βαρύβρομον·
 ὕμμα γὰρ αἰθέρος ἀκάματον σελαγεῖται
 μαρμαρέαις ἐν αὐγαῖς.
 ἀλλ' ἀποσεισάμενοι νέφος ὕμβριον
 ἀθανάτας ἰδέας ἐπιδώμεθα
 τηλεσκόπῃ ὕμματι γαῖαν.

Clouds, 275.

the robe of mist that wrapped them round, and on the watch-towers of the world they sit, bare in their beauty, god-like forms.

Such is the vision which this inimitable Chorus evokes. Its truth has been felt by all who have seen the rising of summer clouds from the waters of the Mediterranean. Indeed, this Chorus belongs to the highest order of poetry. Not only does it furnish an example of the freshness which is peculiar to Aristophanes, but it is in the deepest sense an intuition into the inmost life of nature. We hear in it the voice of a true seer or interpreter, who knows by choice of words and rhythms how to convey his own impressions to our mind. Even Shelley, when he wrote his *Cloud*, had grasped perhaps the secret of the pomp and splendour of Cloudland less firmly than Aristophanes has done, though his images are piled so multitudinously, and every thought or fancy that a cloud suggests is whirled, as it were, in the drift of brilliant and radiant shapes. Aristophanes has this advantage—that something of the mythopœic power still survived in Greece, and that he shared the sculptural genius of his race. Moreover, his audience were prepared by their religious associations to conceive of his Clouds as living creatures, and he was writing for the stage, where the poetry of personification is made easy by direct appeal to the eyesight.

In the *Clouds* as it has been transmitted to us, Aristophanes employs another and more direct form of allegory. He brings upon the stage the *δίκαιος λόγος* in controversy with the *ἄδικος λόγος*—the former representing the old Conservative education of Athens, the other the new theories and modes of life which were beginning to spring up. It has been conjectured that *δίκαιος λόγος* wore the mask of Aristophanes himself, and *ἄδικος λόγος* that of Thrasymachus the Sophist. If this conjecture hits the truth, it is curious that the vulgar logician whom Socrates handles so severely in Plato's *Republic*, should have been chosen as the ideal of his doctrine and influence—the

special pleader of the Phrontisterion. The contest between these two impersonations of modesty and impudence, of manliness and effeminacy, offers an unique example in Greek comic literature of what was common on our own stage about three centuries ago. The Just and Unjust Logoi dispute and wrangle for the favour of Pheidippides precisely like the abstractions in *Hycke Scornor* or *Lusty Juventus*. Of course this kind of allegory is much coarser and affords less scope for poetical treatment than the exquisite mythus of the *Clouds*. The Logoi are but masks or hollow automata, from behind which the poet utters his arguments: there is no illusion of the senses, no enchantment of the fancy in their presentation. Yet the speech of Dikaïos Logos forms one of the purest and most beautiful passages that Aristophanes has written, in its simple and affectionate picture of old Athenian life. The poet, we fear, was very far behind his age: he looked back to the good times when the sailor only knew enough to sing out "Ahoy!" and call for biscuit: he wanted the Athenian lads to have broad backs and sluggish tongues: he was dead to the advantages of dialectic and Socratic definition: he kept trying to bring back the days of Marathon, when nothing could avert the coming days of Syracuse and Ægospotami and Chæronea. We who read the history of Athens by the light of our Grote, we who are rolling our waves towards the rising instead of the setting sun, know now how very perverse and unadvanced the poet was. Yet, for all that, can we fail to be charmed with the picture that he draws of Greek boyhood in the good old times, and to contrast it favourably with the acknowledged impudence and profligacy of Critias and Agathon and Alcibiades—the friends and pupils of Socrates? "In that blissful time," says Dikaïos Logos, "when I flourished, and modesty and temperance were practised, a boy's voice was never heard; but he would set off at daybreak, in snow or sunshine, with his comrades to the school of the harper, where he learned the

ballads of our forefathers in praise of Pallas ; and from the harper he would run to the training-ground and exercise himself with the decorum befitting virtuous youth." The rules for the behaviour of boys which Aristophanes here enunciates, provoke a modern smile ; for the morality of Athens obliged lads to observe the same sort of propriety which we expect from girls. But for all his modesty, the youth of those days was not a milksop. He did indeed shun the public baths and the agora, repel the advances of profligate persons, respect his parents, avoid Hetairai, and form in his breast an image of Aidôs : yet he frequented the wrestling-ground, and grew fair in form and colour with generous exercises, not "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," nor bent and jaded by the restless wrangling of the law courts : but among the sacred olive-trees of the Academy he ran races with his comrade, "crowned with white reeds, smelling of bindweed and careless hours and leaf-shedding poplar, rejoicing in the prime of spring, when the plane-tree whispers to the elm." In these last lines we touch the very core of Greek aristocratic Conservatism—that imperious demand for leisure, for *σχολή τῶν ἀναγκαίων*, of which Aristotle speaks as an essential in the life of free men ; that contempt of all serious time-consuming business which we find in Plato ; that respect for the beauty of the body, and that dislike of every occupation that tended to degrade its form or spoil the freshness of its colour ; that sympathy with nature in her graceful moods ; that well-bred nonchalance ; that love of the gymnasium with its poplar sacred to Herakles, the god of endurance, and its plane-tree of swift Hermes—in a word, those accumulated æsthetical prejudices which marked the race pre-eminent for its artistic faculty, the caste of rich and idle citizens supported by a nation of slaves, the unique and never again to be imitated people, who once and for all upon this earth of ours attained perfection, realized the ideal toward which we vainly strive.

With the last lines of this speech in our memory, we may turn to the dialogues of Plato, whose Phædrus and Charmides and Lysis are true children and disciples of Dikaïos Logos ; or to the Autolycus of Xenophon's *Symposium*, whose breast is as smooth, and skin as bright, and shoulders as broad, and tongue as short, as even Aristophanes could wish ; or we may set before us some statue like the Apoxyomenos of Lysippus, or the Discobolos of Myron, and feel that we have gathered, in fancy at least, the flower of the perfection of the pride of Hellas.

Much of the allegory of Aristophanes consists of metaphors taken literally and expressed by appropriate symbolism to the audience. Thus, Trugaios actually drags the goddess Peace, with her attendants Opora and Theoria, from the well, the Chorus, while they help him, singing "Yoho !" like sailors at a capstan. In the same comedy, War and Havoc are exhibited with a gigantic mortar, in which they bray the States of Greece. Socrates suspended in his basket is a metaphorical allegory of this sort, his posture being peculiarly expressive of star-gazing and abstract speculation at a time when the objects of such contemplations were called τὰ μετέωρα. Of the same kind is the balance in which the lines of Æschylus and Euripides are weighed. Any poet might use the metaphor (weighed in the balance and found wanting) ; but it is a stretch of metaphorical license to exhibit an actual pair of scales upon the stage. Many of the figurative actions of the Hebrew prophets were practical appeals to the imagination, similar to these allegories of Aristophanes. Indeed, such dramatic metaphors may be reckoned among the most powerful instruments in the hands of a great master. Had Dante conceived a masque upon the politics of Italy, we doubt not but that he would have employed some energetic symbols of this sort ; and in passing, it may be said that no artist has appeared in modern times so capable of constructing an allegorical drama in the style of Aristophanes as

Dante. The symbolism of the *Wasps* is somewhat different from that with which we have been dealing. In this play the chorus were armed, no doubt, with lance-like stings; but there was no attempt on the poet's part, as in the case of the *Clouds* and *Birds*, to maintain the illusion of their being wasps. They talk and act like old men; their waspishness is merely metaphorical, and the allegory ends in an appeal to the eyesight. The *Plutus*, on the other hand, presents an example of allegory in the strictly modern sense. It is a Greek anticipation of our moralities, of such a play as might be founded on a portion of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Wealth and Poverty appear upon the stage, and speak appropriately. Avarice and Prodigality are satirized. The use and abuse of riches are contrasted in a series of incidents framed with expressly moral purpose. The whole play is singularly un-Aristophanic. We have here no "Weltvernichtungssee"—no nightingales or climbing apes to speak of. For this very reason it has been copied in modern times (its inner nature rendering it capable of adaptation to our tastes) by Ben Jonson in the *Staple of News*, and by Goethe in the second part of *Faust*.

One word must be devoted to the *Thesmophoriazuseæ*. In the history of dramatic literature, the chief interest of the play is that it differs from the other works of Aristophanes in its structure. It has a regular plot—an intrigue and a solution—and its persons are not allegorical but real. Thus it approaches the standard of modern comedy. But the plot, though gigantic in its scale, and prodigious in its wealth of wit and satire, is farcical. The artifices by which Euripides endeavours to win Agathon to undertake his cause, the disguise of Mnesilochus in female attire, the oratory of the old man against the women in the midst of their assembly, his detection, the momentary suspension of the dramatic action by his seizure of the supposed baby, his slaughter of the swaddled wine-jar, his apprehension by Cleisthenes, the devices and disguises by which Euripides

(in parody of his own tragic scenes) endeavours to extricate his father-in-law from the scrape, and the final ruse by which he eludes the Scythian bowmen, and carries off Mnesilochus in triumph—all these form a series of highly diverting comic scenes. There is no passage in Aristophanes more amusing than the harangue of Mnesilochus. The other women have abused Euripides for slandering their sex in his tragedies. Mnesilochus, the humorous and coarse old rustic, gets up in his flimsy female gear, and eloquently reminds them of the truths which Euripides *might* have divulged. One crime after another is glibly and facetiously recorded, until the little heap of calumnies uttered by Euripides disappears beneath the mountain of confessions piled up by the supposed matron. The portrait, too, of Agathon in the act of composition is exquisitely comic. By comparing it with that drawn by Plato in the *Banquet*, we may to some extent estimate the amount of truth in Aristophanic caricature. The meaningless melodious style—the stream of honeyed words,* *summâ delumbe salivâ*—with which Agathon and his Chorus greet our ears, is scarcely more a parody of his poetry than the speech on love is of his prose. Agathon is discovered lying on a sofa, arrayed in female garments and smelling of cosmetics ; when asked why thus attired, he lisps a languid answer that he is composing a tragedy about women, and wants to be in character :

“ The poet ought to keep in harmony
 With any subject that he has to treat :
 If women be his theme, then must his person
 Be toned and fashioned to a female mood ;

* Mnesilochus' criticism reminds us of Persius :—

ὥς ἡδὺ τὸ μέλος ὦ πότνιαι Γενετυλλίδες,
 καὶ θηλυδριῶδες καὶ κατεγλωτισμένον
 καὶ μανδαλωτόν, ὥστ' ἐμοῦ γ' ἀκρωμένον
 ὑπὸ τὴν ἔδραν αὐτὴν ὑπῆλθε γάργαλος.

Thesm. 130.

But when he writes of men he has no need
 To study change ; 'tis only what we have not
 We seek to supplement by dressing up.
 Besides, how unæsthetic 'tis to see
 A poet coarse and hairy ! Just remember
 Famed Ibycus, Anacreon, Alcæus,
 Who made our music and our metres flow,
 Wore caps, and followed soft Ionian fashions :
 And Phrynichus—this surely you have heard—
 Was beautiful, and beautifully dressed ;
 And this, we cannot doubt, is why his plays
 Were beautiful, for 'tis a natural law
 That like ourselves our work must ever be."

Modern writers upon whose lips *in udo est Menas et Attis* might take some of this satire not inaptly to themselves. But the crowning sport of the *Thesmophoriazusæ* is in the last scene, when Mnesilochus adapts the *Palamedes* and the *Helen* of Euripides to his own forlorn condition, jumbling up the well-known verses of these tragedies with coarse-flavoured rustical remarks ; and when at last Euripides himself acts Echo and Perseus to the Andromeda of his father-in-law, and both together mystify the policeman by their ludicrous utterance of antiphonal lamentations.

I have but scanty space for touching on one of the topics which the *Thesmophoriazusæ* suggests—the satire of Aristophanes upon Athenian women, whom he invariably represents as profligate, licentious, stupid, drunken, thieves and liars. Whether they were in any sense as bad as he has painted them—and he has given them a worse character than any other Greek poet, not even excepting Simonides of Amorgos—or whether their absence from the comic spectacles encouraged a paradoxical misrepresentation of their worst and most exceptional qualities, is not easy to decide. This at least is clear that, while comic exaggeration is obvious in every detail, the picture, overdrawn and coarse as it may be, accords with that of other and less copious Greek satirists ; nor could it have

been tolerated in a society where women held a station of respect and honour.*

The point of the *Thesmophoriazusæ*, so far as the women are concerned, is that while Aristophanes pretends to show up Euripides for his abuse of them, his own satire is far more searching, and penetrates more deeply into the secrets of domestic life. What are the crimes of Phædra in comparison with the habits he imputes to Athenian wives and daughters? The *Lysistrata* will not bear discussion; but in passing I may notice the humour of the oath by wine which the inexorable heroine and her Spartan friend administer. Other oaths might be broken, but no Athenian wife or maid would incur the penalty of this dread imprecation: "If I fail, may the bowl be filled with water." Of the three comedies which treat of women the *Ecclesiazusæ* has the most permanent interest. Indeed, *mutatis mutandis*, its satire might almost be adapted to

* One of the most interesting chapters in Greek history still remains to be written. It should deal in detail with the legal and domestic position of free women at Athens, with the relation of their sons and husbands to Hetairai, and with the whole associated subject of pederastia. Since this essay on Aristophanes was first published, Mr. Mahaffy has done much in his excellent book on *Social Life in Greece* towards clearing up our views upon these matters. But the topic still requires a fuller and more scientific handling. Mr. Mahaffy is particularly felicitous in marking the distinctions of the Herodotean, Thucydidean, and Euripidean estimates of women, in bringing into prominence the *Æconomicus* of Xenophon, and in laying stress upon the warfare of opinion which raged at Athens between conservatives of the Periclean tradition, represented by Aristophanes, and innovators, represented in poetry by Euripides, in philosophy by Plato. I cordially agree with him in his remark that "in estimating women at this time, the Alcestis and Macaria of Euripides are too high, and the women of Aristophanes are too low." (*Social Greece*, 2nd ed. p. 228). The great difficulty which must have been felt by all thoughtful students of Greek literature, is how to reconcile the high ideals of female character, presented by the Attic tragedians, with the contemptuous silence of Thucydides, with the verdict of Plato upon women-lovers as compared with boy-lovers, with the ribaldry allowed to comic poets, and with the comparative absence of female portraits in the biographies of great Athenians composed by Plutarch.

the present day, or to the future which our theorists upon the rights of women are preparing. The Athenian ladies disguise themselves as men, and crowd the assembly, where they out-vote their husbands, sons, and brothers, and proclaim the supremacy of women in the State. Praxagora, the agitator of the scheme, is chosen Strategis. She decides that a community of property and free trade between the sexes are the two things wanted to insure general felicity. The point of the satire consists in this: that the arguments by which the women get the upper hand, all turn on their avowed conservatism; men change and shift, women preserve their old customs, and will maintain the *ἡθός* of the State; but no sooner have they got authority than they show themselves more democratic than the demagogues, more new-fangled in their political notions than the philosophers. They upset time-honoured institutions and make new ones to suit their own caprices, squaring the laws according to the logic of feminine instincts. Of course speculations like those of Plato's *Republic* are satirized in the farcical scenes which illustrate the consequences of this female revolution. But perhaps the finest point about the comedy is its humorous insight into the workings of women's minds—its clear sense of what a topsy-turvy world we should have to live in if women were the lawgivers and governors.

In quitting Aristophanes I am forced to reflect upon the inadequacy of my attempts to interpret the secret of his strength and charm. The epithets which continually rise to our lips in speaking of him—radiant, resplendent, swift, keen, changeful, flashing, magical—carry no real notion of the marvellous and subtle spirit that animates his comedy with life peculiar to itself. In dealing with no other poet is the critic or historian so powerless. No other work of art leaves so incommunicable an impression on the mind of the student. As for my words about Aristophanes, they are “sound and fury signifying nothing:” to be known, he must be read with ad-

miration and delight. But those who have submitted themselves to the influence of his genius, will understand what I mean when, in conclusion, I say that, with Plato and Aristophanes for guides, we can to some extent reconstruct the life of the Athenians, animate the statues of Myron and Lysippus, and see the aisles of the Parthenon or the benches of the Pnyx crowded with real human beings. Plato introduces us to the graver and more elegant side of Attic life, to the *καλο-αγαθοὶ* and *χαρίεντες*, to men of sober tastes and good birth and exquisite breeding. Aristophanes acquaints us with men of pleasure, vulgar and uneducated characters, haunters of the law courts and the market-place and the assembly. From Plato we learn what occupied philosophers and people of distinction. Aristophanes tells us the popular jokes at Athens, how the political and military edicts recorded by Thucydides were familiarly discussed, how people slept and walked, and dressed, and dined. In Plato's Dialogues the fine Greek intellect is shown to us trained and tutored into exquisite forms of elevated culture. In Aristophanes, though art even more consummate has been used, we see the same refined intellect running riot and disporting itself with the flexibility of untameable youth. By Plato we are taught how dignified and humane the Greeks could be, by Aristophanes how versatile and human they were.

CHAPTER IX.

ANCIENT AND MODERN TRAGEDY.

Greek Tragedy and the rites of Dionysus.—A sketch of its origin and history.—The Attic Theatre.—The actors and their masks.—Relation of Sculpture to the Drama in Greece.—The legends used by the Attic tragedians.—Modern liberty in the choice of subjects.—Mystery Plays.—Nemesis.—Modern Tragedy has no religious idea.—Tragic Irony.—Aristotle's definition of Tragedy.—Modern Tragedy offers no *κἀθαρσις* of the passions.—Destinies and Characters.—Female Characters.—The Supernatural.—French Tragedy.—Five Acts.—Bloodshed.—The Unities.—Radical differences in the spirit of ancient and modern art.

IN order to comprehend the differences between the ancient and the modern Drama—between the tragedy of Sophocles and the tragedy of Shakspeare—it is necessary to enter into the details of the history of the Attic stage. In no other department of art is the character of the work produced so closely dependent upon the external form which the artist had to adopt.

Both the Tragedy and Comedy of the Greeks were intimately connected with the religious rites of Dionysus. Up to the very last, they formed a portion of the cultus of the vintage-god, to whom the theatre was consecrated, and at whose yearly festivals the plays were acted. The Chorus, which originally formed the chief portion of the dramatic body, took its station at the altar of Bacchus in the centre of the theatre. Now the worship of Bacchus in Greece had from the first a double aspect—joyous and sorrowful. The joyous festivals were held in celebration of the vigour and the force of nature, in the spring and

summer of the year ; the sorrowful commemorated the sadness of the autumn and the winter. There were therefore two distinct branches of musical and choral art connected with the Dionysiac rites—the one jovial, the other marked by the enthusiasm of a wild grief. From the former of these, or the Revel Song, sprang Comedy ; from the latter, or the Dithyramb, sprang Tragedy. Arion is named as the first great poet who cultivated the Dithyramb and wrote elaborate odes for recitation by the Chorus in their evolutions round the Bacchic altar. His Chorus were attired like Satyrs in goat-skins, to represent the woodland comrades of the god ; hence came the name of Tragedy or Goat-song. At first the Dithyrambic Odes celebrated only the mystical woes of Dionysus : then they were extended so as to embrace the mythical incidents connected with his worship ; and at last the god himself was forgotten, and the tragic sufferings of any hero were chanted by the Chorus. This change is marked by an old tradition concerning Sicily, where it is said that the woes of the hero Adrastus were sung by the Bacchic choir, and that Cleisthenes, wishing to suppress the national mythology, restored the antique Dionysiac function. It also may explain the Greek proverb : “ What has this to do with Dionysus ? ”—a question which might reasonably have been asked when the sacred representation diverged too widely from the line of Bacchic legend.

Thus the original element of Greek Tragedy was the Dithyramb, as cultivated by Arion ; and the first step in the progress of the Dithyrambic Chorus toward the Drama was the introduction of Heroic legends into the odes. The next step was the addition of the Actor. It has been ingeniously conjectured that the actor was borrowed from the guild of Rhapsodes. The Iambics of Archilochus and other poets were recited, as we know, at the feasts of Demeter, whose cult had points of similarity with that of Bacchus. It is not improbable that when the heroic element was added to the Dithyramb, and the

subjects handled by the professional reciters of the Homeric and Cyclic Epics began to form a part of the Dionysiac celebration, a rhapsode was then introduced to help the Chorus in their office. That he declaimed Iambics and not Hexameters may be accounted for by the prevalence of the Iambic in the sister-cult of Demeter. This then was the third step in the development of tragedy. To the Dithyrambic Chorus of Arion was added an interlocutor, who not only recited passages of narrative, but also exchanged speech with the Chorus, and who in course of time came to personate the hero whose history was being celebrated. Thus far had the art advanced in the age of Thespis. The Chorus stood and danced round the altar of Bacchus. The Rhapsode, whom we now begin to call the Actor, stood on a raised stage (*λογεῖον*) above them. The whole history of Greek Tragedy exhibits a regular expansion of these simple elements. The function of the Chorus, the peculiar nature of the masks and dresses, and the very structure of the theatres, can only be explained by reference to this primitive constitution of the Dramatic art.

To Thespis the Athenian, whose first regular exhibition of the Tragic show preceded the birth of Æschylus by about ten years, belongs the credit of having brought the various elements of Tragedy into harmony, and of having fixed the outlines of the Tragic art. The destruction of Athens by the Persian army, like the burning of London, which inflicted so severe an injury upon our early dramatic literature, obliterated the monuments of the genuine Thespian tragedy. Some of the names of these dramas—*Pentheus*, *Phorbas*, *the Funeral Games of Pelias*, *the Priests*—have been preserved ; from which we may conjecture that Thespis composed interludes with regular plots, combining choric passages and monologues uttered by the actor with elucidatory dialogues. His chorus was the traditional band of mummers clad in goat-skins—the *τράγοι* of the ancient Dionysiac festival. The poet himself was the actor, and his portion

of the interlude was written either in Iambic, or, as we may gather from a passage in the *Poetics* of Aristotle, in Trochaic metre. The next great name after Thespis is Phrynichus, who composed a tragic interlude on the taking of Miletus by the Persians. This fact is important, since it proves that even at this early period a dramatist felt justified not merely in departing from the myths of Dionysus, but also in treating the events of contemporary history in his choric Tragedy. The Athenians, however, were indignant at so abrupt a departure from usage, and at the unæsthetical exhibition of disasters which had recently befallen their race. They fined the poet, and confirmed their tragedians in the custom of handling only ancient and religious legends. It is well known that the single exception to this custom which has been preserved to us is the splendid triumph of Æschylus composed upon the ruin of the godless Xerxes. Phrynichus introduced one important change into the Thespian Drama : he established female characters. After him came Pratinas, who altered the old form of the Chorus. Hitherto, whatever may have been the subject of the play, the Bacchic *τράγοι* stood in their quaint goatskins round the thymelé or altar of the god. Pratinas contrived that in future the Chorus should be attired to suit the action of the piece. If the play were written on the fall of Troy, for instance, they appeared as ancient Trojans ; or if it had reference to the house of Laius, they came forth as senators of Thebes. At the same time special pieces for the traditional tragic chorus were retained, and these received the name of Satyric Dramas. Henceforth it was customary for a tragic author to produce at the same time three successive dramas on the subject he selected, together with a satyric play. The only essential changes which were afterwards made in Greek Tragedy, were the introduction of a second actor by Æschylus and of a third actor by Sophocles, the abandonment of the stricter rule of the tetralogy, and the gradual diminution of the importance of the Chorus. The choric

element, which had been everything at the commencement, gave way to the dialogue, as the art of developing dramatic situations and characters advanced ; until in the days of Euripides the Chorus formed a comparatively insignificant part of the tragic machinery. This curtailment of the function of the Chorus was a necessary consequence of progress in the art of exhibiting an imitation of human action and passion. Yet the Chorus never lost its place in Greek Tragedy. It remained to mark the origin of the Drama, and as a symbol of the essentially religious purpose of the Tragic spectacle.

An event is said to have happened during the age of Pratinas which greatly influenced the future of the Attic Drama. The Thespian interludes had been acted on a wooden scaffolding. This fell down on one occasion, and caused so much alarm that the Athenians erected a permanent stone theatre, which they constructed on the south-east side of the Acropolis. Whether this old story is a fiction, and whether the time had not naturally arrived for a more substantial building, may admit of question. At any rate the new theatre was designed as though it were destined to exist for all time, as though its architects were prescient that the Attic Drama would become the wonder of the world. It contained 30,000 spectators, seated in semicircular tiers scooped out of the rock of the Acropolis. Their faces were turned towards Hymettus and the sea. The stage fronted the Acropolis : the actors had in view the cliffs upon which stood the Parthenon and the gleaming statue of Protective Pallas. The whole was open to the air. Remembering these facts, we are enabled to understand the peculiar grandeur and propriety of those addresses to the powers of the earth and sky, to the temples of the gods, to the all-seeing sun and glittering ocean-waves, which are so common in Greek tragedy. The Athenian theatre was brought into close connection with all that was most brilliant in the architecture and the sculpture of Athens, with all that is most impressive in the natural

environments of the city, with the very deities of the Hellenic worship in their visible manifestations to the senses of men. This circumstance alone determined many peculiarities of the Greek Drama, which make it wholly unlike our own. If the hero of a modern play, for instance, calls the sun to witness, he must point to a tissue-paper transparency in the centre of a painted scene : if he apostrophizes ocean, he must turn towards a heaving mass of agitated canvas. But Ajax or Electra could raise their hands to the actual sun, gilding the statue of Athene with living rays ; Prometheus, when he described the myriad laughter of the dimpling waves, knew that the sea was within sight of the audience ; and sun and sea were regarded by the nation at large, not merely as phenomena of our universe, but as beings capable of sympathizing with humanity in its distress. For the same reason nearly all the scenes of the Greek Tragedies are laid in daytime and in the open air. The work of art exhibited in an unparalleled combination of æsthetical definiteness with the actual facts of nature. The imagination is scarcely more wrought upon than the senses ; whereas the Tragedy of Shakspeare makes a direct appeal to the inner eye and to the highly stimulated fancy of the audience. It is generally before a temple or a palace that the action of a Greek play proceeds. Nor was there anything artificial in this custom ; for the Greeks lived in the air of heaven, nor could events of such magnitude as those which their tragedy represented, have been appropriately enacted beneath the shadow of a private roof. Far different were the conditions which the modern dramatist undertook to illustrate. The hesitations of Hamlet, the spiritual conflict of Faustus, the domestic sufferings of the Duchess of Malfi, are evolved with peculiar propriety within the narrow walls of palace-chambers, college-cells, and prisons or mad-houses. Scenery, in our sense of the word, was scarcely required by the Greeks. The name of a tragedy sufficed to determine what palace-gate was represented by the

stage : the statue of a god was enough to show whose temple was intended. This simplicity of theatrical arrangement led to a corresponding simplicity of dramatic construction, to rarity of changes in the scene, and to the stationary character of Greek Tragedy in general.

Hollowed out of the hillside, the seats of the Athenian spectators embraced rather more than a full semicircle, and this large arc was subtended by a long straight line,—the *σκηνὴ*, or background of the stage. In front of this wall ran a shallow platform, not co-extensive with the *σκηνὴ*, but corresponding to the middle portion of it. This platform was the stage proper. It was in fact a development of the Thespian *λογεῖον*. The stage was narrow and raised a little above the ground, to which a flight of steps led from it. On the stage, very long in proportion to its depth, all the action of the play took place : the actors entered it through three openings in the *σκηνὴ*, of which the central was larger and the two side ones smaller. When they stood upon the stage, they had not much room for grouping or for complicated action : they moved and stood like the figures in a bas-relief, turning their profiles to the audience, and so arranging their gestures that a continually harmonious series of figures was relieved upon the background of the *σκηνὴ*. The central opening had doors capable of being thrown back and exhibiting a chamber, in which, at critical moments of the action, such spectacles as the murdered body of Agamemnon, or the suicide of Jocasta, were revealed to the spectators. The chorus had their own allotted station in the centre of the whole theatre—the semicircular pit left between the lowest tier of spectators and the staircase leading to the stage. In the middle of this pit or orchestra was placed the *thymelé*, or altar of Bacchus, round which the chorus moved on its first entrance, and where it stood while witnessing the action on the stage. The chorus entered by side passages leading from the back of the *σκηνὴ*, on a lower level than that of the

stage : nor did they ever leave their orchestra to mount the stage and mingle with the actors. The dressing rooms and offices of the theatre were concealed behind the *σκηνή*. Above the stage was suspended an aërial platform for the gods, while subterranean stairs were constructed for the appearance of ghosts ascending from the nether regions.

These details about the vast size of the theatre, its system of construction, and its exposure to the air, make it clear that no acting similar to that of the modern drama could have been possible on the Attic stage. Any one who has visited the Roman theatre of Orange, where the *σκηνή* is still in tolerable preservation, must have felt that a classical audience could not have enjoyed the subtle intonations of the voice and the delicate changes in the features, expressive of varying passions, which constitute the charm of modern acting. Our intricate and minute effects were out of the question. Everything in the Greek theatre had to be colossal, statuesque, almost stationary. The Greeks had so delicate a sense of proportion and of fitness that they adjusted their art to these necessities. The actors were raised on thick-soled and high-heeled boots : they wore masks, and used peculiar mouth-pieces, by means of which their voices were made more resonant. The dresses which they swept along the stage were the traditional costumes of the Bacchic festivals—brilliant and trailing mantles, which added volume to their persons. All their movements partook of the dignity befitting demigods and heroes. To suppose that these pompous figures were of necessity ridiculous would be a great mistake. Everything we know about Greek art makes it certain that in the theatre, no less than in sculpture and architecture, this nation of artists achieved a perfectly harmonious effect. How dignified, for example, were their masks, may be imagined from the sculptured heads of Tragedy and Comedy preserved in the Vatican—marble faces of sublime serenity, surmounted by the huge

mass of curling hair, which was built up above the mask to add height to the figure. But in order to maintain the grandeur of these personages on the stage, it was necessary that they should never move abruptly or struggle violently. This is perhaps the chief reason why Greek Tragedy was so calm and so processional in character, why all its vehement action took place off the stage, why some of its most impassioned expressions of emotion were cadenced in elaborate lyrics with a musical accompaniment. An actor, mounted on his buskins, and carrying the weight of the tragic mask, could never have encountered a similar gigantic being in personal combat without betraying some awkwardness of movement or exhibiting some unseemly gesture. It was therefore necessary to create the part of the Messenger as an artistic correlative to the peculiarly artificial conditions of the stage. We find in the same circumstance a reason why the tragic situation was sustained with such intensity, why the action was limited to a short space of time and to a single locality, and why few changes were permitted in the characters during the conduct of the same piece. For the mask depicted one fixed cast of features ; and though, as in the case of *Œdipus*, who tears out his eyes in a play of *Sophocles*, the actor might appear twice upon the stage with different masks, yet he could not be constantly changing them. Therefore the strong point of the Greek dramatist lay in the construction of such plots and characters as admitted of sustained and steady passion, whereas a modern playwright aims at providing parts which shall enable a great actor to exhibit lights and shades of varying expression. It still remains a problem how such parts as the *Cassandra* of *Æschylus* and the *Orestes* of *Euripides* could have been adequately acted with a mask to hide the features ; but such effects as those for which *Garrick*, *Rachel*, and *Talma* were celebrated would have been utterly impossible at Athens.

In order to form any conception of a Greek drama, we must

imbue our minds with the spirit of Greek sculpture, and animate some frieze or bas-relief, supplying the accompaniment of simple and magnificent music, like that of Gluck, or like the recitatives of Porpora. Flaxman's designs for Æschylus are probably the best possible reconstruction of the scenes of a Greek tragedy, as they appeared to the eyes of the spectators, relieved upon the background of the σκηνή. Schlegel is justly indignant with those critics who affirm that the modern opera affords an exact parallel to the Greek Drama. Yet the combination of music, acting, scenery, and dancing in such an opera as Gluck's *Orfeo* or Cherubini's *Medea*, may come nearer than anything else towards giving us a notion of one of the tragedies of Euripides. This remark must be qualified by the acknowledgment of a radical and fundamental difference between the two species of dramatic art. Music, dancing, acting, and scenery, with the Greeks, were sculptural, studied, stately; with the moderns they are picturesque, passionate, mobile. If the opera at all resembles the Greek Drama, it is because of the highly artificial development of the histrionic art which it exhibits. The expression of passion in a stationary and prolonged aria, with which we are familiar in the opera, and which is far removed from nature, was of common occurrence in Greek Tragedy.*

* The scene in which Antigone takes leave of the Chorus within sight of her tomb is a good instance of this artificial treatment of passionate situations in the Attic Drama. It has been censured by some critics as being unreasonably protracted. In reality it is in perfect accordance with the whole spirit of Greek Tragedy. The emotions are brought into artistic relief: the figures are grouped like mourners on a sculptured monument: the antiphonal dirges of the princess and her attendants set the pulses of our sympathy in rhythmic movement, so that grief itself becomes idealized and glorified. The depth of feeling expressed, and the highly wrought form of its expression, together tend to rouse and chasten all that is profound and dignified in our emotions. Strophé after strophé, heart-beat by heart-beat, this wonderfully cadenced funeral song of her who is the bride of Acheron proceeds until the marble gates are shut upon Antigone.

So far we have been occupied with those characteristics of the ancient drama, which were immediately determined by the external circumstances of the Attic stage. I have tried to show that some of the most marked qualities of the work of art were necessitated by the conditions of its form. But other and not less important points of difference between the ancient and the modern drama were due to the subject-matter of the former. The Greek playwrights confined themselves to a comparatively narrow circle of mythical stories; * each in succession had recourse to Homer and to the poets of the Epic Cycle. Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, not to mention their numerous forgotten rivals, handled and rehandled the same themes. We have, for example, extant three tragedies, the *Choephoræ* of Æschylus, the *Electra* of Sophocles, and the *Electra* of Euripides, composed upon precisely the same incident in the tale of Agamemnon's children. Modern dramatists, on the contrary, start with the whole stuff of human history; they seek out their subjects where they choose, or invent motives with a view to the exhibition of varied character, force of passion, tragic effect; nor have they any fixed basis of solid thought like the doctrine of Nemesis† whereon to rear their tragic superstructure. In this respect the Mystery Plays of the Catholic Church offer a close parallel to the Greek Drama. In these dramatic shows the whole body of Christian tradition—the Bible, the acts of the saints, and the doctrines of the Church about the Judgment and the final state of the soul—was used as the material from which to fashion sacred plays. But between the Mysteries and the early Attic tragedies there was one great point of difference. The sanctity of the Christian tradition, by giving an immovable form to the legends, precluded all freedom of the fancy. There could be no inventive action of the poet's mind when he was engaged

* See pp. 22, 210.

† See pp. 202-211.

in setting forth the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Atonement, or the final Judgment. His object was to instruct the people in certain doctrines, and all he could do was to repeat over and over again the same series of events in which God had dealt with man. Therefore, when the true dramatic instinct awoke in modern Europe, the playwrights had to quit this narrow sphere of consecrated thoughts. Miracle plays were succeeded by Moralities, by Histories, and by those unfettered creations of which Marlowe in England offered the first illustrious examples. Had the Thespian interludes been as purely didactic in their object as the early Mystery plays of the Church, we should either have possessed no Attic Drama at all or else have received from the Greek poets a very different type of tragedy. As it was, the very essence of Greek religion reached its culminating point in art. Epical mythology attained to final development in the free artistic creations of Sophocles. Meanwhile the dramatists were hampered in their choice of subjects by the artificial restraints imposed upon them. They were never at liberty to invent. They were always bound to keep in view the traditional interpretation of legends to which a semi-religious importance attached.

Many distinctions between the ancient and the modern drama may be deduced from this original difference in the sources of their materials. The conception of retributive justice pervades the whole tragedy of the Greeks; and the maintenance of this one animating idea is due no doubt in a great measure to the continued treatment of a class of subjects which not only remarkably exhibited its working, but which also were traditionally interpreted in its light. The modern drama has no such central idea. Our tragedy imports no dominant religious or moral conception into the sphere of art. Even Shakspeare and Goethe, the most highly moralized of modern dramatists, have been contented with bringing close before our eyes the manifold spectacle of human existence, wonderful and

brilliant, from which we draw such lessons only as can be learned from life itself. They do not undertake, like the Greek tragedians, to supply the solution as well as the problem. It is enough for them to exhibit humanity in conflict, to enlist our sympathies on the side of what is noble, or to arouse our pity by the sight of innocence in misery. The struggle of Lear with his unnatural daughters, the death of Cordelia when the very doors of hope have just been opened ; Desdemona dying by her husband's hand, without one opportunity of explanation ; * Imogen flouted as a faithless wife ; Hamlet wrestling with Laertes in the grave of Ophelia ; Juliet and Romeo brought by a mistake to death in the May-time of their love ; Faust inflicting by his bitter gift of selfish passion woe after woe on Margaret and her family—these are the subjects of our tragedy. We have to content ourselves as we can with this “mask and antimask of impassioned life, breathing, moving, acting, suffering, laughing,” and to moralize it as we may. The case is different with Greek Tragedy. There we always learn one lesson—*τῷ δρᾶσαντι παθεῖν*, the guilty must suffer. It is only in a few such characters as Antigone or Polyxena that pure pathos seems to weigh down the balance of the law.

A minor consequence of the fixed nature of Attic Tragedy was that the dramatists calculated on no surprise in order to enlist the interest of their audience. The name, *Œdipus* or *Agamemnon*, informed the spectators what course the action of the play would take. The art of the poet therefore consisted in so displaying his characters, so preparing his incidents, and so developing the tragic import of the tale, as to excite attention. From this arose a peculiar style of treatment, and in particular that Irony of which so much is spoken. The point, for example, about the *Œdipus Tyrannus* was that the spectators knew his horrible story, but that he did not. Therefore,

* See Appendix for a note on the death of Desdemona.

every word he uttered in his pride of prosperity was charged with sinister irony, was pregnant with doom. Every minute incident brought him nearer to the final crash, which all the while was ready waiting for him. In reading this tragedy of Sophocles we seem to be watching a boatfull of careless persons gliding down a river, and gradually approaching its fall over a vast cliff. If we take interest in them, how terrible is our anxiety when they come within the irresistible current of the sliding water, how frightful is their cry of anguish when at last they see the precipice ahead, how horror-stricken is the silence with which they shoot the fall, and are submerged ! Of this nature is the interest of a good Greek tragedy. But in the case of the modern drama all is different. When our Elizabethan ancestors went to the theatre to hear *Othello* for the first time, very few of them knew the story : as the play proceeded, they could not be sure whether Iago would finally prevail. At every moment the outcome was doubtful. Tragic irony is therefore not a common element in the modern drama. The forcible exhibition of a new and striking subject, the gradual development of passions in fierce conflict, the utmost amount of pathos accumulated round the victims of malice or ill luck, exhaust the resources of the tragedian. The ancient dramatist plays with his cards upon the table : the modern dramatist conceals his hand. Euripides prefixed a prologue descriptive of the action to his pieces. Our tragedies open only with such scenes as render the immediate conduct of the play intelligible.

Aristotle's definition of tragedy, founded upon a vast experience, we need not doubt, of the best Greek dramas, offers another point of contrast between the ancient and the modern art. "Tragedy," he says, "is an imitation of an action that is weighty, complete, and of a proper magnitude ; it proceeds by action and not by narration ; and it effects through pity and terror a purgation of the like passions in the minds of the spec-

tators." This definition, which has caused great difficulty for commentators, turns upon the meaning of the *κάθαρσις*,* or purgation, which Tragedy is supposed to effect. It is quite clear that *all* poetry which stirs the feelings of pity and terror need not at the same time purge them in or from the souls of the listeners, except only in so far as true art is elevating and purifying. Therefore Aristotle must have had some special quality of the Tragic art to which he was accustomed, in his mind. His words seem to express that it is the function of the Tragic Drama to appeal to our deepest sympathies and strongest passions, to arouse them, but at the same time to pacify them, and, as it were, to draw off the dangerous stuff that lies upon our soul,—to resolve the perturbation of the mind in some transcendental contemplation.† This is what the greatest Greek

* The word *κάθαρσις* may possibly have been borrowed from medicine by Aristotle, and his meaning may therefore be that the surplus of the passions of which he speaks is literally purged out of the mental system by the action of Tragedy. This suggestion was, I think, made by Bernays. It has been pointed out to me by my friend, Mr. E. Abbot of Balliol College, that Aristotle, in another passage of the *Poetics* (xvii. 8), uses the word in a lustral meaning. The reference to it in a weighty passage of the *Politics* (viii. 7, 4) seems to prove that the purification was for the individual, not, as Goethe thought, for the passions as exhibited in the work of art itself.

† Milton's description of the poet's function, in the *Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, contains a fine expansion of the phrase *κάθαρσις* in these words:—"To allay the perturbation of the mind, and set the affections in right tune." Milton in his own *Samson Agonistes* followed the Greek usage closely, and concluded the whole drama with a choric reflection upon the wisdom of God's dealings with the race of men. There again he expresses in the very last words of his play the same doctrine of *κάθαρσις* :—

" His servants He, with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,
And calm of mind, all passion spent."

Hegel, in his doctrine of the *Versöhnung*, or reconciliation of opposite passions in a contemplation which is above them and includes them, seems to have aimed at the same law as Aristotle.

Tragedies achieve. They are almost invariably closed by some sentence of the Chorus in which the unsearchableness of God's dealings is set forth, and by which we are made to feel that, after the fitful strife and fever of human wills, the eternal counsels of Zeus remain unchanged, while the moral order of the world, shaken and distorted by the passions of heroic sufferers, abides in the serenity of the Ideal. Furthermore, there is in the very substance of almost all Greek tragedies a more obvious healing of wounds and restoration of harmony than this. The Trilogy of Prometheus was concluded by the absorption of the Titan's vehement will in that of Zeus. The Trilogy of Orestes ends with the benediction of Pallas and Phœbus upon the righteous man who had redeemed the errors of his house. Sophocles allows us a glimpse of Antigone bringing peace and joy to her father and brothers in Hades. The old Œdipus, after his life-wanderings and crimes and woes, is made a blessed Dæmon through the mercy of propitiated deities. Hippolytus is reconciled to his father, and is cheered and cooled in his death-fever by the presence of the maiden Artemis. Thus the terror and pity which have been roused in each of these cases are allayed by the actual climax of the plot which has excited them : grief itself becomes a chariot for surmounting the sources of grief. But the modern drama does not offer this *κάθαρσις* : its passions too often remain unreconciled in their original antagonism : the note on which the symphony terminates is not unfrequently discordant or exciting. Where is the *κάθαρσις* in *King Lear* ? Are our passions purged in any definite sense by the close of the first part of *Faust* ? We are rather left with the sense of inexpressible guilt and unalleviated suffering, with yearnings excited which shall never be quelled. The greatest works of modern fiction—the novels of Balzac, with their philosophy of wickedness triumphant ; the novels of George Eliot, with their dismal lesson of the feebleness of human effort ; the tragedies of Shakspeare, with the silence of the grave for their conclu-

sion—intensify and embitter that “struggle to be what we are not, and to do what we cannot” which Hazlitt gives as an equivalent for life.* The greatest creative poet of this generation writes *ἀνάγκη* upon his title-page. The chief poet of the century makes his hero exclaim :

“Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren.”

Such purification of the passions as modern art achieves, is to be found most eminently in the choric movements of Handel, in the symphonies of Beethoven, in all the great achievements of music. Ancient art aimed at the perfect within definite limits, because human life in the ancient world was circumscribed by mundane limitations, and its conditions were unhesitatingly accepted. Our art aims at the infinite, because we are for ever striving after a completion which cannot be attained. It was not for nothing that Christianity, with its widening of spiritual horizons, closed the ancient and inaugurated the modern age :—

“Une immense espérance a traversé la terre ;
Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut lever les yeux.”

In that fixed mood of restless expectation, in that persistent attitude of the soul upraised to sweep the heavens, there lies the secret of modern art. Life to the Greek belonged to the category of *τὸ πέρας* : it was like a crystal in its well-defined consistency. Our life, whether we regard it from the point of view of science or of religion, belongs to the *ἄπειρον* : it is only one term of an infinite series, the significance whereof is relative to the unknown quantities beyond it. Consequently modern art is nowhere satisfied with merely æsthetic forms.

* In the Greek Drama the notion of Fate was primarily theological : the hero was conducted to his end by gods. In Shakspeare Fate is psychological ; Hamlet's own character is his destiny. In Goethe, Victor Hugo, and George Eliot the conception of Fate has passed into the region of Positivism : the laws of blood, society, and race rule individuals in the *Elective Affinities*, *Les Misérables*, the *Spanish Gipsy*.

The soul with its maladies imperiously demands expression. Michael Angelo was not contented, like Pheidias or Praxiteles, with carving the serenity of godlike men and women. In the figures upon the tombs of the Medici he fashioned four moods of the tortured, aching, anguished soul, to whom the burden of this life is all but intolerable. His frescoes in the Sistine Chapel are subordinated to the expression of one thought—the doom of God which will descend upon the soul of man. Christianity destroyed beyond all possibility of reconstruction the free, frank, sensuality of Paganism. It convicted humanity of sin, and taught men to occupy themselves with the internal warfare of their flesh and spirit as that which is alone eternally important. Life itself, according to the modern formula, is a conflict which will be concluded one way or the other beyond the grave. Meanwhile upon this earth the conflict is undetermined. Therefore art, which reflects life, represents the battle, and dares not to anticipate its outcome. In this relation the very pathology of the soul becomes poetic. Ἐρᾶν ἀδυνάτων, said the Greek proverb, νόσος τῆς ψυχῆς—to desire impossible things is a disease of the soul. But *l'amour de l'impossible*—the straining of the soul after the infinite, the desire to approximate in this world to a dream of the ecstatic fancy—all the rapture of saints, the self-denial of solitaries, the death in life of penitents—is not defined by us as a disease. On the contrary, this passion for the impossible has been held through many centuries of modern history to be the truest sign of the soul's health; and even where such superstition has not penetrated, poets like Byron have prided themselves upon the same temper displayed in their extravagant yearnings. Don Juan, enormous in his appetite for pleasure, and rebellious on the grave's brink beneath the hand of God; Faust, insatiable of curiosity, and careless of eternity in his lust for power; Tannhäuser, pursuing to the end his double life of love too sweet to be abandoned and of conscience too acutely sensitive to be stilled; these are

our modern legends. These, with so little of mere action in them, so much of inner meaning and mental experience, yield the truest materials to our artists. Over and over again have Faust, Tannhäuser, and Don Juan supplied the poet with subjects wherein no merely local or temporary tragedy is set forth, but the destiny of the modern man is shown as in a magic mirror. Nor has the advent of science as yet restored our mind to that "passionless Bride, divine Tranquillity," which the Greeks enjoyed, and which alone could be the mother of such art as the antique. Although the sublime cheerfulness of Goethe shows by way of forecast how the scientific mood may lead to this result hereafter, for the present science has deepened and complicated our most distressing problems, has rendered the anxiety of man about his destiny still more cruel, has made him still more helpless in the effort to comprehend his relations to the Universe, by seeming to prove that his most cherished hypotheses are mere illusions. Like a spoiled child, who has been taught to expect too much, to think about himself too much, and to rely too much on flattery, humanity, shrinking from the cold calm atmosphere of science, still cries in feverish accents with St. Paul: "If Christ be not risen, then are we of men most wretched!" How strange would that sentence have sounded to Sophocles! How well it suits the tragedy of Shakspeare, which has for its ultimate *Versöhnung* the hope, felt, though unexpressed, of St. Paul's exclamation!

As a corollary to what has hitherto been said about the differences between the drama of Sophocles and that of Shakspeare it follows that the former aims at depicting the destinies, and the latter the characters of men.* Shakspeare exhibits individual

* Character in a Greek play is never so minutely anatomized as in a modern work of fiction. We do not actually see the secret workings of the mainsprings of personality. We judge a hero of Sophocles by his

wills and passions clashing together and producing varied patterns in the web of life. Sophocles unfolds schemes and sequences of doomed events, where individual wills and passions play indeed their part, but where they are subordinated to the idea which the tragedian undertakes to illustrate. A play of Æschylus or Sophocles strikes us by the grandeur of the whole : a play of Shakspeare or Goethe overwhelms us by the force and frequency of combined and interacting motives. No analysis can be too searching or acute for the profound conception which pervades the *Oresteia* of Æschylus ; but there is no single character in Æschylus or in Sophocles so worthy of minute investigation as that of Hamlet or of Faust. If a critic looks to the general effect of a tragedy, to the power of imagination displayed in its conception as a single work of art, he will prefer the *Agamemnon* to *Macbeth* ; but if he seek for the creation of a complete and subtle human soul, he will abandon Clytemnestra for the Thane of Cawdor's wife. The antique drama aims at the presentation of tragic situations, determined and controlled by some mysterious force superior to the agents. The modern aims at the presentation of tragic situations, immediately produced and brought about by the free action of the *dramatis personæ*.

One advantage which the modern dramatist has over the ancient is that he may introduce very numerous persons in concerted action without the danger of confusion, and that of these

actions and by his relations to other men and women more than by his soliloquies or by scenes specially constructed to expose his qualities. In this respect Greek Tragedy again resembles Greek sculpture. As in their sculpture the Greek artists felt the muscular structure of the human frame with exquisite sensibility, while they did not obtrude it upon the spectator ; so in their tragedy the poets preferred to exhibit the results rather than to lay bare the process of mental and emotional activity. The modern tragedian shifts his ground somewhat, but he chooses an equally legitimate province of poetry when he discloses the inmost labyrinths in the character of a Hamlet or a Faust.

many may be female. It has been ably argued by De Quincey that the Attic tragedians had small opportunity of studying the female character, and that it would have been indecorous for them to have painted women with the perfect freedom of a Cleopatra or a Vittoria Corombona.* Consequently their women are either superficially and slightly sketched like Ismene and Chrysothemis; or else they are marked by something masculine, as in the case of Clytemnestra and Medea; or again they move our sympathy not by the perfection of their womanliness but by the exhibition of some simple and sublime self-sacrifice—notable examples being the filial devotion of Antigone, the sisterly affection of Electra, the uncomplaining submission of Iphigeneia and Polyxena, the wifely self-abandonment of Alcestis, the almost frigid acquiescence in death of Makaria. The later Greek drama, and especially the drama of Euripides, abounded in these characters. They are incarnations of certain moral qualities. Like the masks which concealed the actor's face, they show one fixed and sustained mood of emotion: we find in them no hesitancy and difficult resolve, no ebb and flow of wavering inclination, but one immutable, magnificent, heroic fixity of purpose. In a word, they are conformed to the sculptural type of the Greek tragic art.†

* This seems to have been the gist of one of the grudges of Aristophanes against Euripides, as I have indicated above, p. 229, *note*. He made the love of Sthenobœa, the vengeance of Medea, too interesting.

† The most perfect female character in Greek poetry is the Antigone of Sophocles. She is purely Greek, unlike any modern woman of fiction, except perhaps the Fedalma of George Eliot. In her filial piety, in her intercession for Polyneices at the knees of Œdipus, in her grief when her father is taken from her, she resembles the woman whom most men have learned to honour in their sisters or their daughters or their mother. But the Antigone, who defies Creon, who lays her life down lest her brother should receive no funeral dues, who marches to her living tomb in order that the curse-haunted corpse of Polyneices should have rest in Hades, appears to the modern mind a being from another sphere. A strain of unearthly music seems to announce her entrance and her exit on the stage. That the sacrifice of the sister's very life, the breaking of her plighted

Owing to the very structure of the Attic stage, Greek tragedy could never have recourse to those formless, vague, and unsubstantial sources of terror and of charm which the modern dramatist has at his command. How could such airy nothings as the elves of the *Tempest*, the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the witches of *Macbeth* have been brought upon that colossal theatre in the full blaze of an Athenian noon? Figures of Thanatos and of Lyssa did indeed appear: the ghost of Clytemnestra roused the sleeping Furies in the courts of

troth to Hæmon, should follow upon the sprinkling of those few handfuls of dust—that she should give that life up smilingly, nor ever in her last hours breathe her lover's name,—is a tragic circumstance for which our sympathies are not prepared. It is almost in vain that we recall to mind such considerations as enable us to conceive the peculiarities of her circumstances and her character,—first, that she has inherited a portion of her father's proud self-will, and then, that disaster after disaster,—the loss of Œdipus, the death of her two brothers,—has come huddling upon her in a storm of fate. In spite of all this she strikes us at the first as frigid. It is only after long contemplation of her perfect lineaments that we come to recognize a purity of passion, a fixity of purpose, a loyalty of kinship, a sublime sense of duty, raised far above the strain of common modern sentiment. Even Alfieri, in the noble outline-drawing he has sketched from Sophocles, could not refrain from violating the perfection of the picture by these final words:—

“Emone, ah! tutto io sento,
Tutto l' amor, che a te portava: io sento
Il dolor tutto, a cui ti lascio.”

None such are to be found in Sophocles upon the lips of the dying Antigone. She is all for her father and her brothers. The tragedy of Hæmon belongs to Creon, not to her. None of the women of Euripides are so sublime as this. The situations he has invented for them are less complex; their humanity is less perfect. In my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets* I have written more at length upon Antigone. See chapter vii. The temptation to use the *Colonæus* to illustrate and soften the impression of the *Antigone* is very great. Yet it is one which ought probably to be resisted, or, at least, yielded to with caution; for the *Colonæus* was composed long after the *Antigone*, and nothing justifies the hypothesis that a Greek tragedian felt bound to adhere in different dramas to one conception of the same character.

Delphi: the phantom of Darius hovered over his grave. But these spectres were sculpturesque—such as Pheidias might have carved in marble, and such as we see painted on so-called Etruscan vases. They were not Banquo-apparitions gliding into visible substance from the vacant gloom and retiring thitherward again. When such creatures of the diseased imagination had to be suggested, the seer, like Cassandra, before whose eyes the phantoms of the children of Thyestes passed, or Orestes, who drew his arrows upon an unseen cohort of threatening fiends, stared on vacancy. Shakspeare dares at times to realize such incorporeal beings, to give to them a voice and a visible form. Yet it may be doubted whether even in his tremendous supernatural apparatus the voice which shrieked to Macbeth “Sleep no more!” the mutterings of Lady Macbeth in her somnambulism, the spectre which Hamlet saw and his mother could not see, the dream of Clarence with its cry of injured ghosts, are not really the most appalling.

The Greek drama owed its power to the qualities of regularity and simplicity: the strength of the modern lies in subtlety and multiplicity. The external conditions of the Attic theatre no less than the prevailing spirit of Greek tragic art forced this simplicity and regularity upon the ancient dramatists. These conditions do not occur in the modern world. We have our little theatres, our limited audience, our unmasked actors, our scenical illusions, our freedom in the choice of subjects. Therefore to push the subtlety and multiplicity of tragic composition to the utmost—to arrange for the most swift and sudden changes of expression in the actor, for the most delicate development of a many-sided character, for the most complicated grouping of contrasted forms, and for the utmost realization of imaginative incidents—is the glory of a Shakspeare or a Goethe. The French dramatists made the mistake of clinging to the beggarly elements of the Attic stage,

when they had no means of restoring its colossal grandeur. When it was open to them to rival the work of the ancients in a new and truly modern style, they hampered their genius by arbitrary rules, and thought that they were following the principles of the highest art, while they submitted to the mere necessities of a bygone form of presentation. If Racine had believed in Nemesis, if Versailles had afforded him a theatre and an audience like that of Athens, if his actors had worn masks, if sculpture had been the dominant art of modern Europe, he would have been following the right track. As it was, he became needlessly formal. The same blind enthusiasm for antiquity led to the doctrine of the Unities, to the abstinence from bloodshed on the stage, and to the restriction of a play to five acts. Horace had advised a dramatist not to extend his tragedy beyond the fifth act, nor to allow Medea to murder her children within sight of the audience. All modern playwrights observe the rule of five acts: nor is there much to be said against it, except that the third act is apt to be languid for want of matter. But the Greeks disregarded this division: judging by the choric songs, we find that some of their tragedies have as many as seven, and some as few as two acts. Again, as to bloodshed on the stage, it is probable that if the Greek actors had not been so clumsily arrayed, we should have had many instances of their violation of this rule. *Æschylus* discloses the shambles where *Agamemnon* and *Cassandra* lie weltering in their blood, and hammers a stake through the body of *Prometheus*. *Sophocles* exhibits *Œdipus* with eyes torn out and bleeding on his cheeks. *Euripides* allows the mangled corpse of *Astyanax* to be brought upon the stage in his father's shield. There is nothing more ghastly in an actual murder than in these spectacles of slaughter and mutilation. With reference to the Unities, the French critics demand that a drama shall proceed in the same place, and the playwrights are at infinite pains to manage

that no change of scene shall occur. But Aristotle, whose authority they claim, is silent on the point ; while the usage of the Greek Drama shows more than one change of place,—especially in the *Ajax* of Sophocles, and in the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, where the scene is shifted from the temple of Phœbus at Delphi to the Areopagus at Athens. Still the exigencies of the Greek theatre made it advisable to alter the centre of action as little as possible ; and as a matter of convenience this requirement was complied with. The circumstances of our own stage have removed this difficulty, and it is only on the childish principle of maintaining an impossible illusion that the unity of place can be observed with any propriety. The unity of time has more to say for itself. Aristotle remarks that it is better to have a drama completed within the space of a day : this rule flows from his just sense of the proportion of parts ; a work of art ought to be such that the mind can easily comprehend it at a glance. Yet many Greek plays, such as the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, where Agamemnon has time to return from Troy, or the *Eumenides*, where Orestes performs the journey from Delphi to Athens, disregard this rule in cases where it required no strain of the mind to bridge over the space of a few unimportant days or hours. When in the modern drama we are introduced to the hero of a play first as a child and then as a full-grown man, and are forced meanwhile to keep our attention on his acts in the interval as important to the dramatic evolution, there is a gross violation of æsthetical Unity. About the Unity of action all critics are agreed. It is the same as unity of interest, or unity of subject, the interest and the subject of a play being its action. A good tragedy must have but one action, just as a good epic or a good poem of any sort must have but one subject ; for the simple reason that, as the eye cannot look at two things at once, so the mind cannot attend to two things at once. Modern poets have been apt to disregard this canon of common sense : the under-

plots of many plays and the episodes of such epics as the *Orlando* of Ariosto are not sufficiently subordinated to the main design or interwoven with it. Aristotle is also right in saying that the unity of the hero is not the same as the unity of action : a play, for example, on the labours of Hercules could only be made a good drama if each labour were shown to be one step in the fulfilment of one divinely appointed task. Shakspeare has complied with the canon of the Unity of action in all his tragedies. Whether Goethe has done so in *Faust* may admit of doubt. The identity of his hero seems to him sufficient for the tragic unity of his piece : yet he has given us another centre of interest in Margaret, whose story is but a mere episode in the experience of Faust. Unity of action in a tragedy, the very soul of which is action, is the same as organic coherence in a body ; and therefore, as every work of art ought, according to the energetic metaphor of Plato, to be a living creature, with head, trunk and limbs all vitalized by one thought, this Unity is essential. Admitting this point, we may fairly say that the other rules of French dramatic criticism are not only arbitrary but also founded on a mistake with regard to the Greek theatre and a misapprehension of the proper functions of the modern stage. Composing in obedience to them is like walking upon stilts in a country where there are no marshes to make the inconvenience necessary.

In this review of the differences between our own tragedy and that of the Greeks I have scarcely touched upon those primary qualities which differentiate all modern from ancient art. The "sentiment of the infinite," which Renan regards as the chief legacy of mediævalism to modern civilization, and the preoccupation with the internal spirit rather than the external form which makes Music the essentially modern, as Sculpture was the essentially ancient art, are causes of innumerable peculiarities in our conception of tragedy. I have hardly alluded to these, but have endeavoured to show that the immer-

sion of Greek Tragedy in religious ideas, the fixed body of mythical matter handled by the Greek dramatists in succession, and the actual conditions of the Attic theatre will account for the greater number of those characteristics which distinguish Sophocles from Shakspeare, the prince of Greek from the prince of modern tragic poets.

CHAPTER X.

THE IDYLLISTS.

Theocritus.—His Life.—The Canon of his Poems.—The meaning of the word *Idyll*.—Bucolic Poetry in Greece, Rome, Modern Europe.—The Scenery of Theocritus.—Relation of Southern Nature to Greek Mythology and Greek Art.—Rustic Life and Superstitions.—Feeling for Pure Nature in Theocritus.—How distinguished from the same feeling in Modern Poets.—Galatea.—Pharmaceutriæ.—Hylas.—Greek Chivalry.—The Dioscuri.—Thalysia.—Bion.—The Lament for Adonis.—Moschus.—Europa.—Megara.—Lament for Bion.—The debts of Modern Poets to the *Idyllists*.

OF the lives of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus there is very little known, and that little has been often repeated. Theocritus was a Syracusan, the son of Praxagoras and Philinna. Some confusion as to his parentage arose from the fact that in the seventh *Idyll* Theocritus introduced himself under the artificial name of Simichidas, which led early critics to suppose he had a father called Simichus. It is however quite clear that the concurrent testimony of Suidas and of an epigram in the *Anthology* which distinctly asserts his descent from Praxagoras and Philinna, is to be accepted in preference to all conjectures founded on a *nom de plume*. Theocritus flourished between 283 and 263 B.C., but the dates and circumstances of his birth and death are alike unknown. We may gather inferentially or directly from his poems that he sought the patronage of Ptolemy Philadelphus at Alexandria, and lived for some time among the men of letters at his court. Indeed Theocritus was the most brilliant ornament of that somewhat artificial period of literature; he above all the Alexandrian poets carried the old genius of

Greece into new channels, instead of imitating, annotating, and rehandling ancient masterpieces. The sixth and seventh Idylls prove that Aratus, the astronomer, was a familiar friend of the Syracusan bard ; probably the frequent allusions to meteorology and the science of the stars which we trace in the poems of Theocritus, may be referred to this intimacy. From the Idylls again we learn that the poet left Alexandria wearied with court life, and, like Spenser, unwilling

“To lose good nights that might be better spent,
To waste long days in pensive discontent,
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
To feed on hope, and pine with fear and sorrow.”

He seems, however, to have once more made trial of princely favour at the Syracusan court of Hiero, and to have been as much offended with the want of appreciation and good taste as with the illiberality that he found there. Among his friends were numbered Nicias, the physician of Miletus, and his wife Theugenis, to whom he addressed the beautiful little poem called *ἡλακατή*, or the Distaff—a charming specimen of what the Greek muse could produce by way of *vers de société*. The end of his life is buried in obscurity. We can easily believe that he spent it quietly among the hills and fields of Sicily, in close communion with the nature that he loved so well. His ill-success as a court poet does not astonish us ; the panegyrics of Hiero and Ptolemy are among his worst poems—mere pinch-beck when compared with the pure gold of the Idylls proper. It was in scenes of natural beauty that he felt at home, and when he died he left a volume of immortal verse, each line of which proclaims of him—“Et ego in Arcadiâ.” We cannot give him a more fitting epitaph than that of his own Daphnis :—

ἔβα ῥόον· ἔκλυσε δῖα
τὸν Μώσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ.*

* “Down the dark stream he went ; the eddies drowned
The muses’ friend, the youth the nymphs held dear.”

If we know little of Theocritus, less is known of Bion. Suidas says that he was born at Smyrna, and the elegy written on his death leads us to suppose that he lived in Sicily, and died of poison wilfully administered by enemies. Theocritus, though his senior in age and his predecessor in Bucolic poetry, seems to have survived him. Bion's elegist, from whom the few facts which we have related with regard to the poet of Smyrna's life and untimely death are gathered, has generally been identified with Moschus. Ahrens, however, with characteristic German scepticism, places the Ἐπιτάφιος Βίωνος upon a list of *Incertorum Idyllia*. Nor can it be denied that the author of this poem leads us to believe that he was a native of Magna Græcia, whereas Moschus is known to have been a Syracusan. The third and last of the Sicilian Idyllists, he stands at a great distance from Theocritus in all essential qualities of pastoral composition. He has more of the grammarian or man of erudition about him; and we can readily conceive him to have been, according to the account of Suidas, a friend of Aristarchus. Of the dates of his life nothing can be recorded with any certainty. He seems to have lived about the end of the third century B.C.

During the short period in which Bucolic poetry flourished under Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, Syracuse remained beneath the sceptre of Hiero. While the bloody strife was being waged between Rome and Carthage for the empire of the Mediterranean, Syracuse, intermediate between the two great combatants, was able not only to maintain a splendid independence under the sway of her powerful tyrant but also to afford the Romans signal aid upon the battle-fields of Sicily. In Sicily, the sun of Greece still shone with some of its old radiance on the spots where, before Athens had assumed the intellectual supremacy of Hellas, poetry, philosophy, and all the arts of life had first displayed their splendid spring-time. The island in which the April of the Greek spirit had disclosed its

earliest flowers now bore the last but not least lovely wreath of autumn. The winter was soon coming. Rome and her Verres were already looking upon Trinacria as their prey ; and the Idyllic garland was destined to crown with exotic blossoms the brows of Virgil.

About the authenticity of many of the Idylls grave questions have been raised. It is hard to believe that all the thirty which bear the name of Theocritus were really written by him. The 23rd and 25th, for instance, are not in his style ; while the 19th reminds us more of the Anacreontic elegance of Bion or Moschus than of his peculiarly vigorous workmanship. The 29th again, though admitted as genuine by Ahrens, might well pass for the work of an earlier Æolic writer.* But without some shock to my feelings I cannot entertain the spuriousness of the 21st Idyll, which Ahrens places among the productions of some doubtful author. The whole series after the 18th have been questioned. These however include the Epical compositions of Theocritus, who might well have assumed a different manner when treating of Hércules or the Dioscuri from that in which he sang the loves of Lycidas and Daphnis. That they are inferior to his pastorals is not to be wondered at ; for he who blows his own flute with skill may not be therefore strong enough to sound the trumpet of Homer. Ahrens, as observed above, extends his criticism to the lament for Bion, which, I confess, appears to me more full of fire and inventive genius than any other of the poems attributed to Moschus.

Yet in these matters of minute evidence too much depends upon mere conjecture and comparison of styles for us to remove old landmarks with certainty. Suppose all records of Raphael's works had been lost, and a few fragments of the Cartoons together with the Transfiguration and the little picture of the Sleeping Knight alone remained of all his paintings, would not

* I have placed an English version of this beautiful and characteristic composition in the Appendix.

some Ahrens be inclined to attribute the Sleeping Knight to a weaker if not less graceful artist of the Umbrian School? The *Allegro* and *Penseroso* might by a similar process of disjunctive criticism be severed from the *Paradise Lost*. On the other hand, nothing can be more doubtful than assertions in favour of authenticity. It is almost impossible for a foreigner to perceive minute differences of style in the works of two contemporary poets, and infinitely more difficult for a modern to exercise the same exact discrimination in deciding on the monuments of classic art. Schlegel, in his *History of Dramatic Literature*, asserts that he discovers no internal difference between Massinger and Fletcher. Yet an English student is struck by the most marked divergences of feeling, language, natural gifts, and acquired habits of thought in these two dramatists. Thus the difficulty of such criticism is twofold. If a Syracusan of 200 B.C. could discuss our lucubrations on the text of the Bucolic poets, he would probably in one case express astonishment at our having ascribed two dissimilar Idylls to Theocritus, and in another case explain away our scepticism by enumerating the three or four successive manners of the poet. Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus are the Eponyms of Idyllic poetry. To each belongs a peculiar style. It is quite possible that some Idylls of successful imitators whose names have been lost may have been fathered upon the three most eminent founders of the school.

The name of the Idyll sufficiently explains its nature. It is a little picture. Rustic or town life, legends of the gods, and passages of personal experience supply the idyllist with subjects. He does not treat them lyrically, following rather the rules of epic and dramatic composition. Generally there is a narrator, and in so far the Idyll is epic; its verse too is the hexameter. But occasionally the form of dramatic monologue, as in the *Pharmaceutria*, or that of dramatic dialogue, as in the *Adoniasusæ*, takes the place of narrative. Bion's lament

for Adonis again is a kind of sacred hymn ; while the dirge on Bion's death is elegiac. Two Idylls of Theocritus are encomiastic ; several celebrate the deeds of ancestral Doric heroes—Heracles and the Dioscuri. One is an epistle. Many of Bion's so-called Idylls differ little, except in metre, from the Anacreontics, while one at least of the most highly finished pieces of Theocritus must be ranked with erotic poetry of the purely lyrical order. It will be seen from these instances that the idyllic genius admitted many species, and that the Idyllists were far from being simply pastoral poets. This form of composition was in fact the growth of a late age of Greek art, when the great provinces had been explored and occupied, and when the inventor of a new style could legitimately adopt the tone and manner of his various predecessors. Perhaps the plastic arts determined the direction of Idyllic poetry, suggesting the name and supplying the poet with models of compact and picturesque treatment. In reading the Idylls it should never be forgotten that they are pictures, so studied and designed by their authors. They ought to affect us in the same way as the bas-reliefs and vases of Greek art, in which dramatic action is presented at one moment of its evolution, and beautiful forms are grouped together with such simplicity as to need but little story to enhance their value. If we approach the Idylls from this point of view, and regard them as very highly finished works of decorative art, we shall probably be able to enjoy their loveliness without complaining that the shepherds and shepherdesses are too refined, or that the landscapes have not been drawn from nature.

Without discussing the whole hackneyed question of Bucolic poetry, a word must be said about its origin, and about the essential difference between Theocritus and modern pastorals. It is natural to suppose that country folk, from the remotest period of Greek history, refreshed themselves with dance and song, and that music formed a part of their religious

ceremonials. The trials of strength which supply the *motive* of so many Theocritean Idylls were quite consistent with the manners of the Greeks, who brought all rival claims of superiority to the touchstone of such contests. Their antiquity in the matter of music may be gathered from the legends of Pan and Apollo, and of Apollo and Marsyas. Phœbus, in the character of shepherd to Admetus, gave divine sanction to Bucolic minstrelsy. In respect of bodily strength, the gymnastic rivalry of Olympia and other great Hellenic centres was so important as to determine the chronology of Greece,—while even claims to personal beauty were decided by the same trial: the three goddesses submitted to the arbitration of Paris; and there were in many states ἀριστεία of physical charms, not to mention the boys' prize for kisses at Nisæan Megara. Bucolic poetry may therefore be referred to the pastoral custom of shepherds singing together and against each other at festivals or on the green.

It was the genius of Theocritus in all probability which determined the Doric and Sicilian character of the Idylls we possess. He, a Syracusan and a Dorian, perfected the *genre*, and was followed by his imitators. Nothing can be more simple and lifelike than the conversations of his rustics, or more nicely discriminated than the pedestrian style of their dialogue and the more polished manner of their studied songs. The poet has no doubt invested these rural encounters with the imaginative beauty which belongs to art. He has attributed to Corydon and Thyrsis much of his own imagination and delicate taste and exquisite sense of natural loveliness. Had he refrained from doing so, his Idylls would not have challenged the attention and won the admiration of posterity. As it is, we find enough of rustic grossness on his pages, and may even complain that his cowherds and goatherds savour too strongly of their stables. Of his appreciation of scenery it is difficult to speak in terms of exaggerated praise. As I pur-

pose to discuss this subject more minutely further on, it may here be enough to remark that he alone of pastoral poets drew straight from nature, and fully felt the charm which underlies the facts of rustic life.

In comparison with Theocritus, Bion and Moschus are affected and insipid. Their pastorals smack of the study more than of the fields. Virgil not only lacks his vigour and enthusiasm for the open-air life of the country, but, with Roman bad taste, he commits the capital crime of allegorizing. Virgil's pernicious example infected Spenser, Milton, and a host of inferior imitators, flooding literature with dreary pastorals in which shepherds discussed politics, religion, and court-gossip, so that at last Bucolic poetry became a synonym for everything affected and insipid. Poetry flourishes in cities, where rustic song must always be an exotic plant. To analyze Poliziano, Sanazaro, Guarini, Tasso, Spenser, Fletcher, Jonson, Barnfield, Browne, Pope, &c., and to show what strains of natural elegance adorn their imitations of the ancients, would be a very interesting but lengthy task. As society became more artificial, especially at Florence, Paris, and Versailles, the taste for pseudo-pastorals increased. Court-ladies tucked up their petticoats and carried crooks with ribbons at their tops, while Court-poets furnished aristocratic Corydons with smooth verses about pipes and pine-trees, and lambs and wattled cotes. The whole was a dream and a delusion ; but this mirage of rusticity appropriated the *name* of pastoral, and reflected discredit even on the great and natural Theocritus. At length this *genre* of composition, in which neither invention nor observation nor truth nor excellence of any kind except inglorious modulation of old themes was needed, died a natural death ; and the true Bucolic genius found fresh channels. Crabbe revived an interest in village life ; Burns sang immortal lyrics at the plough ; Goethe achieved a masterpiece of Idyllic delineation ; Wordsworth

reasserted the claims of natural simplicity.; Keats expressed the sensuous charms of rustic loveliness; Tennyson and Barnes have written rural idylls in the dialects of Lincolnshire and Dorsetshire; while other writers are pursuing similar lines of composition. Theocritus, it is true, differs widely from these poets both in his style and matter. But he deserves to rank among the most realistic artists of the nineteenth century on account of his simplicity and perfect truth to nature. In reading him we must divest ourselves of any prejudices which we have acquired from the perusal of his tasteless imitators. We must take his volume with us to the scenes in which he lived, and give him a fair trial on his own merits.

It is on the shores of the Mediterranean—at Sorrento, at Amalfi, or near Palermo, or among the valleys of Mentone,—that we ought to study Theocritus, and learn the secret of his charm.* Few of us pass middle life without visiting one or other of these sacred spots, which seem to be the garden of perpetual spring. Like the lines of the Sicilian idyllist, they inspire an inevitable and indescribable *πόθος*, touching our sense of beauty with a subtle power, and soothing our spirits with the majesty of classical repose. Straight from the sea-beach rise mountains of distinguished form, not capped with snow or clothed with pines, but carved of naked rock. We must accept their beauty as it is, nude, well defined, and unadorned, nor look in vain for the mystery or sublimity or picturesqueness of the Alps. Light and colour are the glory of these mountains. Valleys divide their flanks, seaming with shadow-belts and bands of green the broad hillside, while lower down the olives spread a hoary greyness and soft robe of silver mist, the skirts of which are kissed by tideless waves. The harmony between the beauty of the olive boughs and the blue sea can be better felt than described. Guido, whose subtlety of sentiment was very rare,

* I may refer my readers to the chapter on the Cornice in my *Sketches in Italy and Greece* for a fuller treatment of this landscape.

has expressed it in one or two of his earliest and best pictures by graduated tones of silver, azure, and cool grey. The definite form and sunny brightness of the olive-tree suits our conception of the Greek character. It may well have been the favourite plant of the wise and calm Athené. Oaks with their umbrageous foliage, pine-trees dark and mournful upon Alpine slopes, branching limes, and elms in which the wind sways shadowy masses of thick leaves, belong, with their huge girth and gnarled boles and sombre roofage, to the forests of the North, where nature is rather an awful mother than a kind foster-nurse and friend of man. In northern landscapes the eye travels through vistas of leafy boughs to still, secluded crofts and pastures, where slow-moving oxen graze. The mystery of dreams and the repose of meditation haunt our massive bowers. But in the South, the lattice-work of olive boughs and foliage scarcely veils the laughing sea and bright blue sky, while the hues of the landscape find their climax in the dazzling radiance of the sun upon the waves, and the pure light of the horizon. There is no concealment and no melancholy here. Nature seems to hold a never-ending festival and dance, in which the waves and sunbeams and shadows join. Again, in northern scenery, the rounded forms of full-foliaged trees suit the undulating country, with its gentle hills and brooding clouds ; but in the South the spiky leaves and sharp branches of the olive carry out the defined outlines which are everywhere observable through the broader beauties of mountain and valley and sea-shore. Serenity and intelligence characterize this southern landscape, in which a race of splendid men and women lived beneath the pure light of Phœbus, their ancestral god. Pallas protected them, and golden Aphrodité favoured them with beauty. Nations as great and noble have arisen among the oak and beech woods of the North ; strong-sinewed warriors, heroic women, counsellors with mighty brains, and poets on whose tongue the melody of music lingers like a

charm. But the Greeks alone owned the gift of innate beauty and unerring taste. The human form upon those bare and sunny hills, beneath those twinkling olive boughs, beside that sea of everlasting laughter, reached its freedom; and the spirit of human loveliness was there breathed fully into all the forms of art. Poetry, sculpture, architecture, music, dancing, all became the language of that moderate and lucid harmony which we discover in the landscape of the Greeks.

Olives are not however by any means the only trees which play a part in idyllic scenery. The tall stone-pine is even more important; for, underneath its shade the shepherds loved to sing, hearing the murmur in its spreading roof, and waiting for the cones with their sweet fruit to fall. Near Massa, by Sorrento, there are two gigantic pines so placed that, lying on the grass beneath them, one looks on Capri rising from the sea, Baiæ, and all the bay of Naples sweeping round to the base of Vesuvius. Tangled growths of olives, oranges, and rose-trees fill the garden-ground along the shore, while far away in the distance pale Inarime sleeps, with her exquisite Greek name, a virgin island on the deep. In such a place we realize Theocritean melodies, and find a new and indestructible loveliness in the opening line of his first idyll:—

ἄδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἃ πίτυς, αἰπόλε, τήνα.

These pines are few and far between. Growing alone or in pairs, they stand like monuments upon the hills, their black forms sculptured on the cloudlike olive groves, from which at intervals spring spires and columns of slender cypress-trees.

Here and there in this bright garden of the age of gold white villages are seen, and solitary cottage roofs high up among the hills,—dwellings perhaps of Amaryllis, whom the shepherds used to serenade. Huge fig-trees lean their weight

of leaves and purple fruit upon the cottage walls, while cherry-trees and apricots snow the grass in spring with a white wealth of April blossoms. The stone walls and little wells in the cottage gardens are green with immemorial moss and ferns, and fragrant with gadding violets that ripple down their sides, and chequer them with blue. On the wilder hills you find patches of ilex and arbutus glowing with crimson berries and white waxen bells, sweet myrtle rods and shafts of bay, frail tamarisk and tall tree-heaths that wave their frosted boughs above your head. Nearer the shore, the lentisk grows, a savoury shrub, with cytisus and aromatic rosemary. Clematis and polished garlands of tough sarsaparilla wed the shrubs with clinging, climbing arms; and here and there in sheltered nooks the vine shoots forth luxuriant tendrils bowed with grapes stretching from branch to branch of mulberry or elm, flinging festoons on which young loves might sit and swing, or weaving a lattice-work of leaves across the open shed. Nor must the sounds of this landscape be forgotten,—sounds of bleating flocks, and murmuring bees, and nightingales, and doves that moan, and running streams, and shrill cicadas, and hoarse frogs, and whispering pines. There is not a single detail which a patient student may not verify from Theocritus.

Then too it is a landscape in which sea and country are never sundered. This must not be forgotten of Idyllic scenery; for it was the warm sea-board of Sicily, beneath protecting heights of *Ætna*, that gave birth to the Bucolic muse. The intermingling of pastoral and sea life is exquisitely allegorized in the legend of *Galatæa*; and on the cup which Theocritus describes in his first Idyll, the fisherman plays an equal part with the shepherd youths and the boy who watches by the vineyard wall. The higher we climb upon the mountain-side the more marvellous is the beauty of the sea, which seems to rise as we ascend, and stretch into the sky. Sometimes a little

flake of blue is framed by olive boughs, sometimes a turning in the road reveals the whole broad azure calm below. Or after toiling up a steep ascent we fall upon the undergrowth of juniper, and lo ! a double sea, this way and that, divided by the sharp spine of the jutting hill, jewelled with villages along its shore, and smiling with fair islands and silver sails. Upon the beach the waves come tumbling in, swaying the corallines and green and purple sea-weeds in the pools. Ceaseless beating of the spray has worn the rocks into jagged honeycombs on which lazy fishermen sit perched, dangling their rods like figures in Pompeian frescoes.

In landscapes such as these we are readily able to understand the legends of rustic gods ; the metamorphoses of Syrinx, Narcissus, Echo, Hyacinthus, and Adonis ; the tales of slumbering Pan, and horned satyrs, and peeping fauns, with which the Idyllists have adorned their simple shepherd songs. Here, too, the Oread dwellers of the hills, and dryads, and sylvans, and water-nymphs, seem possible. They lose their unreality and mythic haziness ; for men themselves are more a part of Nature here than in the North, more fit for companionship with deities of stream and hill. Their labours are lighter and their food more plentiful. Summer leaves them not, and the soil yields fair and graceful crops. There is surely some difference between hoeing turnips and trimming olive boughs, between tending turkeys on a Norfolk common and leading goats to browse on cytisus beside the shore, between the fat pasturage and bleak winters of our midland counties and the spare herbage of the South dried by perpetual sunlight. It cannot be denied that men assimilate something from their daily labour, and that the poetry of rustic life is more evident upon Mediterranean shores than in England.

Nor must the men and women of classical landscape be forgotten. When we read of the Idylls of Theocritus, and

wish to see before us Thestylis, and Daphnis, and Lycidas, we have but to recall the perfect forms of Greek sculpture. We may for instance summon to our mind the Endymion of the Capitol, nodding in eternal slumber, with his sheep-dog slumbering by : or Artemis stepping from her car ; her dragons coil themselves between the shafts and fold their plumeless wings ; or else Hippolytus and Meleager booted for the boar-chase : or Bacchus finding Ariadne by the sea-shore ; mænads and satyrs are arrested in their dance ; flower-garlands fall upon the path : or a goat-legged satyr teaches a young faun to play ; the pipe and flute are there, and from the boy's head fall long curls upon his neck. Or Europa drops anemone and crocus from her hand, trembling upon the bull as he swims onward through the sea : or tritons blow wreathed shells, and dolphins splash the water : or the eagle's claws clasp Ganymede, and bear him up to Zeus : or Adonis lies wounded, and wild Aphrodité spreads hungry arms, and wails with rent robes tossed above her head. From the cabinet of gems we draw a Love, blind, bound, and stung by bees ; or a girl holding an apple in her hand ; or a young man tying on his sandal. Then there is the Praxitelean genius of the Vatican who might be Hylas, or Uranian Erôs, or Hymenæus, or curled Hyacinthus—the faun who lies at Munich overcome with wine, his throat bare, and his deep chest heaving with the breath of sleep—Hercules strangling the twin snakes in his cradle, or ponderous with knotty sinews and huge girth of neck—Demeter, holding fruits of all sorts in one hand and corn stalks in the other, sweeping her full raiment on the granary floor. Or else we bring again the pugilist from Caracalla's bath,—bruised faces and ears livid with unheeded blows,—their strained arms bound with thongs, and clamps of iron on their fists. Processions move in endless line, of godlike youths on prancing steeds, of women bearing baskets full of cakes and flowers, of oxen lowing to the sacrifice. The Trojan heroes fall with smiles

upon their lips ; the Athlete draws the strigil down his arm ; the sons of Niobe lie stricken, beautiful in death. Cups too and vases help us, chased with figures of all kinds,—dance, festival, love-making, rustic sacrifice, the legendary tales of hate and woe, the daily Idylls of domestic life.

Such are some of the works of Greek art which we may use in our attempt to realize Theocritus. Nor need we neglect the monuments of modern painting—Giorgione's pastoral pictures of piping men and maidens crowned with jasmine flowers, Raphael's Triumph of Galatea, and Tintoretto's Marriage of Ariadne, or the Arcadians of Poussin reading the tale of death upon the gravestone, and its epitaph—"Et ego."

To reconstruct the mode of life of the Theocritean *dramatis personæ* is not a matter of much difficulty. Pastoral habits are singularly unchangeable, and nothing strikes us more than the recurrence of familiar rustic proverbs, superstitions, and ways of thinking which we find in the Idyllic poets. The mixture of simplicity and shrewdness, of prosaic interest in worldly affairs and of an unconscious admiration for the poetry of nature, which George Sand has recently assigned with delicate analysis to the Bucolic character in her Idylls of Nohant, meets us in every line of the Sicilian pastorals. On the Mediterranean shores too the same occupations have been carried on for centuries with little interruption. The same fields are being ploughed, the same vineyards tilled, the same olive-gardens planted, as those in which Theocritus played as a child. The rocks on which he saw old Olpis watching for the tunnies, with fishing-reed and rush basket, are still haunted through sunny hours by patient fishermen. Perhaps they cut their reeds and rushes in the same river-beds ; certainly they use the same sort of κάλαμος. The goats have not forgotten to crop cytissus and myrtle, nor have the goat-herds changed their shaggy trousers and long crooks. You may still pick out a shepherd lad among a hundred by his skin and cloak. It is even said that the

country ditties of the Neapolitans are Greek ; and how ancient is the origin of local superstitions who shall say ? The country folk still prefer, like Comatas in the fifth Idyll, garden-grown roses to the wild eglantine and anemones of the hedgerow, scorning what has not required some cost or trouble for its cultivation. Gretchen's test of love by blowing on thistle-down does not differ much from that of the shepherd in the third Idyll. Live blood in the eye is still a sign of mysterious importance (Idyll iii. 36). To spit is still a remedy against the evil eye (vii. 39). Eunica, the town girl, still turns up her nose at the awkward cowherd ; city and country are not yet wholly harmonized by improved means of locomotion. Then the people of the South are perfectly unchanged—the fisher boys of Castellamare ; the tall straight girls of Capri singing as they walk with pitchers on their heads and distaffs in their hands ; the wild Apulian shepherds ; the men and maidens laughing in the olive-fields or vineyards ; the black-browed beauties of the Cornice trooping to church on Sundays with gold earrings, and with pink tulip-buds in their dark hair. One thing however is greatly altered. Go where we will, we find no statues of Priapus and the Nymphs. No lambs are sacrificed to Pan. No honey or milk is poured upon the altars of the rustic Muse. The temples are in ruins. Aloes and cactuses have invaded the colonnades of Girgenti, and through the halls of Pæstum winds whistle, and sunbeams stream unheeded. But though the gods are gone, men remain unaltered. A little less careless, a little more superstitious they may be ; but their joys and sorrows, their vices and virtues, their loves and hates, are still the same.

Such reflections are trite and commonplace. Yet who can resist the force of their truth and pathos ?

οὐχ ἅμιν τὸν Ἔρωτα μόνοις ἔτεχ', ὥς ἔδοκεῦμεν,
Νικία, φτίνει τοῦτο θεῶν ποκα τέκνον ἔγεντο·

οὐχ ἅμῃν τὰ καλὰ πρᾶτοις καλὰ φαίνεται ἡμεῖς,
οἱ θνατοὶ πελόμεσθα, τὸ δ' αὔριον οὐκ ἐσορώμεσθαι *—

said Theocritus, looking back into the far past, and remembering that the gifts of love and beauty have belonged to men and gods from everlasting. With what redoubled force may we, after the lapse of twenty centuries, echo these words, when we tread the ground he knew, and read the songs he sang! His hills stir our vague and yearning admiration, his sea laughs its old laugh of waywardness and glee, his flowers bloom yearly, and fade in the spring, his pine and olive branches overshadow us; we listen to the bleating of his goats, and taste the sweetness of the springs from which he drank; the milk and honey are as fresh upon our lips, the wine in winter by the wood fire, when the winds are loud, is just as fragrant; youth is still youth, nor have the dark-eyed maidens lost their charm. Truly οὐχ ἅμῃν τὰ καλὰ πρᾶτοις καλὰ φαίνεται ἡμεῖς. In this consists the power of Theocritean poetry. It strikes a note which echoes through our hearts by reason of its genuine simplicity and pathos. The thoughts which natural beauty stirs in our minds, find their embodiment in his sweet strong verse; and though since his time the world has grown old, though the gods of Greece have rent their veils and fled with shrieks from their sanctuaries, though in spite of ourselves we turn our faces skyward from the earth, though emaciated saints and martyrs have supplanted Adonis and the Graces, though the cold damp shades of Calvinism have chilled our marrow and our blood, yet there remain deep down within our souls some primal sympathies with nature, some instincts of the Faun, or Satyr, or Sylvan, which education has not quite eradicated. "The hand which hath long time held a violet doth not soon forego her

* Not for us alone, as we once thought, friend Nicias, did Love's parent, whosoever among gods that was, beget Lord Erôs. Not for us did fair things first reveal their fairness; we who are mortal men, and have no vision of the morrow.

perfume, nor the cup from which sweet wine had flowed his fragrance."

I have dwelt long upon the peculiar properties of classical landscape as described by the Greek idyllists, and as they still exist for travellers upon the more sheltered shores of the Mediterranean, because it is necessary to understand them before we can appreciate the *truth* of Theocritus. Of late years much has been written about the difference between classical and modern ways of regarding landscape. Mr. Ruskin has tried to persuade us that the ancients only cared for the more cultivated parts of nature, for gardens or orchards, from which food or profit or luxurious pleasure might be derived. And in this view there is no doubt some truth. The Greeks and Romans paid far less attention to inanimate nature than we do, and were beyond all question repelled by the savage grandeur of marine and mountain scenery, preferring landscapes of smiling and cultivated beauty to rugged sublimity, or the picturesqueness of decay. In this they resembled all southern nations. An Italian of the present day avoids ruinous places and solitudes however splendid. Among the mountains he complains of the *brutto paese* in which he has to live, and is always longing for town gaieties and the amenities of civilized society.* The ancients again despised all interests that pretended to rival the paramount interest of civic or military life. Seneca's figurative expression *circum flosculos occupatur*, might be translated literally as applied to a trifler, to denote the scorn which thinkers, statesmen, patriots, and generals of Greece and Rome felt for mere rural prettiness; while Quintilian's verdict on

* One bright morning in the first week of June I went out into the fields at Borca below Macugnaga, which were then full of brilliant and sweet flowers. There I met an old woman, with whom I talked about her life in what seemed to me a terrestrial Paradise. She threw her arms and eyes to heaven, and looking round her, cried, "*Che brutto paese!*" "Ah, what an ugly country to live in!" Compare Browning's *Up at a Villa, Down in the City*.

Theocritus (whom however he allows to be *admirabilis in suo genere*), *musa illa rustica et pastoralis non forum modo verum ipsam etiam urbem reformidat*, characterizes the insensibility of urban intellects to a branch of art which we consider of high importance. But it is very easy to overstrain this view, and Mr. Ruskin, perhaps, has laid an undue stress on Homer in his criticism of the classics; whereas it is among the later Greek and Roman poets that the analogy of modern literature would lead us to expect indications of a genuine taste for unadorned nature. These signs the Idyllic poets amply supply; but in seeking for them we must be prepared to recognize a very different mode of expression from that which we are used to in the florid poets of the modern age. Conciseness, simplicity, and an almost prosaic accuracy are the never-failing attributes of classical descriptive art. Moreover, humanity was always more present to their minds than to ours. Nothing evoked sympathy from a Greek unless it appeared before him in a human shape, or in connection with some human sentiment. The ancient poets do not describe inanimate nature as such, or attribute a vague spirituality to fields and clouds. That feeling for the beauty of the world which is embodied in such poems as Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* gave birth in their imagination to definite legends, involving some dramatic interest and conflict of passions. We who are apt to look for rhapsodies and brilliant outpourings of eloquent fancy, can scarcely bring ourselves to recollect what a delicate sense of nature and what profound emotions are implied in the conceptions of Pan and Hyacinthus and Galatea. The misuse which has been made of mythology by modern writers has effaced half its vigour and charm. It is only by returning to the nature which inspired these myths that we can reconstruct their exquisite vitality. Different ages and nations express themselves by different forms of art. Music appears to be dominant in the present period; sculpture ruled among the Greeks, and struck the keynote for all other arts. Even those

sentiments which in our mind are most vague, the admiration of sunset skies, or flowers or copsewoods in spring, were expressed by them in the language of definite human form. They sought to externalize and realize as far as possible, not to communicate the inmost feelings and spiritual suggestions arising out of natural objects. Never advancing beyond corporeal conditions, they confined themselves to form, and sacrificed the charm of mystery, which is incompatible with very definite conception. It was on this account that sculpture, the most exactly imitative of the arts, became literally Architectonic among the Greeks. And for a precisely similar reason music, which is the most abstract and subjective of the arts, the most evanescent in its material, and the vaguest, assumes the chief rank among modern arts. Sculpture is the poetry of the body, music the language of the soul.

Having once admitted their peculiar *mode* of feeling Nature, no one can deny that landscape occupies an important place in Greek literature. Every line of Theocritus is vital with a strong passion for natural beauty, incarnated in myths. But even in descriptive poetry he is not deficient. His list of trees and flowers is long, and the epithets with which they are characterized are very exquisite,—not indeed brilliant with the inbreathed fancy of the North, but so perfectly appropriate as to define the special beauty of the flower or tree selected. In the same way, a whole scene is conveyed in a few words by mere conciseness of delineation, or by the artful introduction of some incident suggesting human emotion. Take for example this picture of the stillness of the night :—

ἡνίδε σιγῇ μὲν πόντος, σιγῶντι δ' ἄηται ·
 ἃ δ' ἐμὰ οὐ σιγῇ στέρνων ἔντοσθεν ἀνία,
 ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τήνῃ πᾶσα καταίθομαι, ὅς με τάλαιναν
 ἀντὶ γυναικὸς ἔθηκε κακὰν καὶ ἀπάρθενον ἦμεν.*

Idyll ii. 38-41.

* “Now rests the deep, now rest the wandering winds,
 But in my heart the anguish will not rest,

Or this :—

ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν χαίροισα ποτ' ὠκεανὸν τρέπε πώλους
πότνι', ἐγὼ δ' οἶσω τὸν ἐμὸν πόνον, ὥσπερ ὑπέσταν.
χαῖρε, Σελαναία λιπαρόχροε· χαίρετε δ', ἄλλοι
ἀστέρες, εὐκῆλοιο κατ' ἄντυγα Νυκτὸς ὀπαδοί.*

Idyll ii. 163 et seqq.

Or this of a falling star :—

κατήριπε δ' ἐς μέλαν ὕδωρ
ἄθροός, ὥς ὅκα πυρσὸς ἀπ' οὐρανῷ ἤριπεν ἀστήρ
ἄθροός ἐν πόντῳ, ναύταις δέ τις εἶπεν ἑταίροις·
κουφότερόν, ὦ· παῖδες, ποιείσθ' ὅπλα· πλευστικὸς οὖρος.†

Idyll xiii. 49-52.

Or the seaweeds on a rocky shore (vii. 58), or the summer bee (iii. 15), or the country party at harvest time (vii. 129 to the end). In all of these a peculiar simplicity will be noticed, a self-restraint and scrupulosity of definite delineation. To Theocritus the shadowy and iridescent fancies of modern poetry would have been unintelligible. The creations of a Keats or Shelley would have appeared to be monstrous births, like the Centaurs of Ixion, begotten by lawless imaginations upon cloud and mist. When the Greek poet wished to express the charm of summer waves he spoke of Galatea, more fickle and light than thistle-down, a maiden careless of her lover and as cruel as the sea. The same waves suggested to Shakspeare these lines, from *Midsummer Night's Dream* :—

While for his love I pine who stole my sweetness,
And made me less than virgin among maids."

* "Adieu, dread queen, thou to the ocean turn
Thy harnessed steeds ; but I abide and suffer :
Adieu, resplendent moon, and all you stars,
That follow on the wheels of night, adieu !"

† "Into the black wave
Fell headlong as a fiery star from heaven
Falls headlong to the deep, and sailors cry
One to another, Lighten sail ; behold,
The breeze behind us freshens !"

“Thou rememberest

Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song ;
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music ;”

and to Weber the ethereal “mermaid's song” in *Oberon*. No one acquainted with Shakspeare and Weber can deny that both have expressed with marvellous subtlety the magic of the sea in its enchanting calm, whereas the Greek poet works only by indirect suggestion, and presents us with a human portrait more than a phantom of the glamour of the deep. What we have lost in definite projection we have gained in truth, variety, and freedom. The language of our art appeals immediately to the emotions, disclosing the spiritual reality of things, and caring less for their form than for the feelings they excite in us. Greek art remains upon the surface, and translates into marble the humanized aspects of the external world. The one is for ever seeking to set free, the other to imprison thought. The Greek tells with exquisite precision what he has observed, investing it perhaps with his own emotion. He says, for instance :—

αἶθε γεινοίμαν

ἃ βομβεῦσα μέλισσα, καὶ ἐς τεδὺν ἄντρον ἰκοίμαν,
τὸν κισσὸν διαδὺς καὶ τὰν πτέριν, ἧ τὸ πικράσδῃ.*

The modern poet, to use Shelley's words,

“Will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom ;
Nor heed nor see what shapes they be,

* “Would I were

The murmuring bee, that through the ivy screen
And through the fern that hides thee, I might come
Into thy cavern !”

But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality,"

endeavouring to look through and beyond the objects of the outer world, to use them as the starting-points for his creative fancy, and to embroider their materials with the dazzling *fleur-de-lis* of his invention. Metamorphosis existed for the Greek poet as a simple fact. If the blood of Adonis turned to anemones, yet the actual drops of blood and the flowers remained distinct in the poet's mind; and even though he may have been sceptical about the miracle, he restrained his fancy to the reproduction of the one old fable. The modern poet believes in no metamorphosis but that which is produced by the alchemy of his own brain. He loves to confound the most dissimilar existences, and to form startling combinations of thoughts which have never before been brought into connection with each other. Uncontrolled by tradition or canons of propriety, he roams through the world, touching its various objects with the wand of his imagination. To the west wind he cries :—

"Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning; there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
Of some fierce Mænad, ev'n from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. . . ."

Imagine how astonished even Æschylus would have been at these violent transitions and audacious transformations! The Greeks had few conceits :* they did not call the waves

* Perhaps this is over-stated. In the later Greek literature of the Sophists we find many very exquisite *conceits*. Philostratus, for example, from whom Jonson translated "Drink to me only with thine eyes," calls

“nodding hearse-plumes” like Calderon, or the birds “winged lyres” like Marini, or daisies “pearled Arcturi of the earth” like Shelley, or laburnums “dropping wells of fire” like Tennyson. If they ventured on such licenses in their more impassioned lyrics, they maintained the metaphor with strict propriety. One good instance of the difference in this respect between the two ages is afforded by Ben Jonson, who translates Sappho’s

ἦρος ἱμερόφωνος ἄγγελος ἀηδών,

by “the dear glad angel of the spring, the nightingale.” Between ἄγγελος and *angel* there is the distance of nearly twenty centuries ; for though Ben Jonson may have meant merely to anglicise the Greek word, he could not but have been glad of the more modern meaning.

So much of this essay has already been devoted to the consideration of Theocritean poetry in general, that I cannot here afford to enter into the details of his several Idylls. A few however may be noticed of peculiar beauty and significance. None are more true to local scenery than those which relate to the story of Galatea. In this brief tale, the life of the mountains and the rivers and the sea is symbolized,—the uncouth and gigantic hills, rude in their rusticity—the clear and lovable stream—the merry sea, inconstant and treacherous, with shifting waves. The mountain stands for ever unremoved ; love as he will, he can but gaze upon the dancing sea, and woo it with gifts of hanging trees, and cool shadowy caverns, and still sleeping-places in sheltered bays. But the stream leaps down from crag to crag, and gathers

the feet of the beloved one ἐρηρυσμένα φιλήματα, or “kisses pressed upon the ground.” Even Empedocles (see p. 51) and Pindar (see p. 193) are not free from the vice of artificial metaphor. Compare, too, the laboured metaphors, and compound epithets quoted from *Chæremón* in my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets*, p. 328, and the specimens quoted below from Meleager.

strength and falls into the arms of the expectant nymph—a fresh lover, fair and free, and full of smiles. Supposing this marriage of the sea and river to have been the earliest idea of the mythus, in course of time the persons of Acis and Galatea, and the rejected lover Polyphemus, became more and more humanized, until the old symbolism was lost in a pastoral romance. Polyphemus loves, but never wins: he may offer his tall bay-trees and slender cypresses, and black ivy, and sweet-fruited vines, and cold water flowing straight—a drink divine—from the white snows of wooded Ætna: he may sit whole days above the sea, and gaze upon its smiling waves, and tell the nymph of all his flocks and herds, or lure her with promises of flowers and fawns and bear's whelps to leave the sea to beat upon its shore, and come and live with him and feed his sheep. It is of no use. Galatea heeds him not, and Polyphemus has to shepherd his love as best as he can. Poetry in this idyll is blended with the simplest country humour. The pathos of Polyphemus is really touching, and his allusions to the sweetness of a shepherd's life among the hills abound in unconscious poetry; side by side with which are placed the most ludicrous expressions of uncouth disappointment, together with shrewd observations on the value of property and other prosaic details. If I mistake not, this is true of the rustic character, in which, though stirred by sorrow into sympathy with nature, habitual caution and shrewdness survive. The meditations of the shepherd in the third idyll exhibit the same mixture of sentiments.

As a specimen of the Idylls which illustrate town life I select the second, the humour of its rival, the fifteenth, being of that perfect sort which must be read and laughed over, but which cannot well be analyzed. The subject of the *Pharmaceutria* is an incantation performed in the stillness of the night by a proud Syracusan lady who has been deserted by her lover. In delineating the fierceness of her passion and

the indomitable resolution of her will Theocritus has produced a truly tragic picture. Simætha, maddened by vehement despair, resorts to magic arts. Love, she says, has sucked her life-blood like a leech, and parched her with the fever of desire. She cannot live without the lover for whose possession she has sacrificed her happiness and honour. If she cannot charm him back again, she will kill him. There are poisons ready to work her will in the last resort. Meanwhile we see her standing at the magic wheel, turning it round before the fire, and charging it to draw false Delphis to her home. A hearth with coals upon it is at hand, on which her maid keeps sprinkling the meal that typifies the bones of Delphis, the wax by which his heart is to be consumed, and the laurel bough that stands for his body. At the least sign of laziness Simætha scolds her with hard and haughty words. She stands like a Medea, seeking no sympathy, sparing no reproaches, tiger-like in her ferocity of thwarted passion. When the magic rites have been performed, and Thestyliis has gone to smear an ointment on the doors of Delphis, Simætha leaves the wheel and addresses her soliloquy to the Moon, who has just risen, and who is journeying in calm and silver glory through the night. There is something sublime in the contrast between the moonlight on the sea of Syracuse and the fierce agony of the deserted lioness. To the Moon she confides the story of her love: "Take notice of my love, whence it arose, dread Queen." It is a vivid and tragic tale of southern passion: sudden and consuming, recklessly gratified, and followed by desertion on the one side and by vengeance on the other.* Simætha has no doubt many living parallels among Sicilian women. The classical reader will find in her narration a description of the

* How wonderfully beautiful is her description of Delphis and his comrade Eudamnippus: "their cheeks and chin were yel ower than helichrysus; their breasts more radiant far than thou, O Moon, as having lately left the fair toil of the wrestling-ground."

working of love hardly to be surpassed by Sappho's Ode, or Plato's *Phædrus*. The wildness of the scene, the magic rites, the august presence of the Moon, and the murderous determination of Simætha heighten the dramatic effect, and render the tale excessively interesting.

As a picture of classical sorcery this Idyll is very curious. Nothing can be more erroneous than to imagine that witchcraft is a northern invention of the middle ages, or that the Brocken is its head-quarters. With the exception of a few inconsiderable circumstances, all the terrible or loathsome rites of magic were known to the ancients, and merely copied by the moderns. Circe in Homer, Simætha in Theocritus, Canidia in Horace, the Libyan sorceress of Virgil, the Saga of Tibullus, Medea in Ovid, Erichtho in Lucan, and Megæra in Claudian (to mention no more), make up a list of formidable witches to whom none of the hideous details of the black art were unknown. They sought for poisonous herbs at night, lived in ruinous places, ransacked charnel-houses for dead bodies, killed little children to obtain their fat for unguents, compelled the spirits of the dead to rise, and after entering a fresh corpse to reveal the mysteries of fate, devoured snakes, drank blood, raised storms at sea, diverted the moon from her course, muttered spells of fearful import, and loved above all things to "raise jars, jealousies, strifes, like a thick scurf o'er life." Even in the minutest details of sorcery they anticipated the witches of the middle ages. Hypsipyle in Ovid mentions a waxen portrait stuck full of needles, and so fashioned as to waste the life of its original. The witch in the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius anoints herself, and flies about like a bird at night. Nor were werewolves, those most ghastly creations of diseased imagination, unfamiliar to the Greeks and Romans, as may be proved from Herodotus, Virgil, Ovid, Petronius, and Apuleius. Those who care to pursue this subject will find a vast amount of learning collected on the point by Ben Jonson in his annotations to

The Masque of Queens. One fact however must be always borne in mind : the ancients regarded witchcraft either as a hideous or a solemn exercise of supernatural power, not recognizing any Satanic agency or compact with Hell. *Hecate triviis ululata per urbes*, the "Queen of the Night and of the Tombs," assisted sorcerers : but this meant merely that they trafficked in the dark with the foul mysteries of death and corruption. The classical witches were either grave and awful women, like the Libyan priestess in the *Æneid*, or else loathsome pariahs, terrible for their malignity, like Lucan's Erichtho. Mediævalism added a deeper horror to this superstitious and ghoulish conception by the thoughts of spiritual responsibility and of league with God's enemies. Damnation was the price of magic power ; witchcraft being not merely abominable in the eyes of men but also unpardonable at the bar of divine justice.

Several poems of Theocritus are written on the theme of Doric chivalry, and illustrate the heroic age of Greece. They may be compared to the *Idylls of the King*, for their excellence consists in the consummate art with which episodes from the legendary cycles of a bygone age are wrought into polished pictures by a cultivated poet. The thirteenth Idyll is especially remarkable for the exquisite finish of its style and also for the light it throws on the mutual relations of knight and squire in early Greek warfare. Theocritus chooses for the subject of this poem an episode in the life of Heracles, the Dorian hero, when he and other foremost men of Hellas, *θεῖος ἄωτος ἠρώων*, followed Jason in the Argo to the Colchian shores, and he took young Hylas with him ; "for even," says Theocritus, "the brazen-hearted son of Amphitryon, who withstood the fierceness of the lion, loved a youth, the charming Hylas, and taught him like a father everything by which he might become a good and famous man ; nor would he leave the youth at dawn, or noon, or evening, but sought continually

to fashion him after his own heart, and to make him a right yokefellow with him in mighty deeds." How he lost Hylas on the Cianian shore, and in the wildness of his sorrow let Argo sail without him, and endured the reproach of desertion is well known. Theocritus has wrought the story with more than his accustomed elegance. But I wish to confine attention to the ideal of knighthood and knightly education presented in the passage quoted. Heracles was not merely the lover but the guardian also and tutor of Hylas. He regarded him not only as an object of tenderness, but also as a future friend and helper in the business of life. His constant aim was to form of him a brave and manly warrior, a Herculean hero. And in this respect Heracles was the Eponym and patron of an order which existed throughout Doric Hellas. This order, protected by religious tradition and public favour, regulated by strict rules, and kept within the limits of honour, produced the Cretan lovers, the Lacedæmonian "hearers" and "inspirers," the Theban immortals who lay with faces turned so stanchly to their foes that vice seemed incompatible with so much valour. Achilles was another Eponym of this order. In the twenty-ninth Idyll, the phrase, Ἀχιλλῆϊοι φίλοι is used to describe the most perfect pair of manly friends. The twelfth Idyll is written in a similar if a weaker and more wanton vein. The same longing retrospect is cast upon the old days "when men indeed were golden, when the love of comrades was mutual," and constancy is rewarded with the same promise of glorious immortality as that which Plato holds out in the *Phædrus*. Bion, we may remark in passing, celebrates with equal praise the friendships of Theseus, Orestes, and Achilles. Without taking some notice of this peculiar institution, in its origin military and austere, it is impossible to understand the chivalrous age of Greece among the Dorian tribes. In the midst of brute force and cunning and an almost absolute disregard of what we are accustomed

to understand by chivalry—gentleness, chastity, truth, regard for women and weak persons—this one anomalous sentiment emerges.

Passing to another point in which Greek differed from mediæval chivalry, we notice the semi-divine nature of the heroes : *θεῖος ἄνθρωπος* is the name by which they are designated, and supernatural favour is always showered upon them. This indicates a primitive society, a national consciousness ignorant of any remote past. The heroes whom Theocritus celebrates are purely Dorian—Heracles, a Jack the Giant-Killer in his cradle, brawny, fearless, of huge appetite, a mighty trainer, with a scowl to frighten athletes from the field ; Polydeuces, a notable bruiser ; Castor, a skilled horseman and a man of blood. In one point the twin sons of Leda resembled mediæval knights. They combined the arts of song with martial prowess. Theocritus styles them *ἱππῆες κιθαρισταὶ, ἀεθλητῆρες αἰοῖδοι*—harp-playing riders of horses, athlete poets. Their achievements narrated in the twenty-second Idyll may be compared with those of Tristram and Lancelot. The gigantic warrior whom they find by the well in the land of the Bebrycians, gorgeously armed, insolent, and as knotty as a brazen statue, who refuses access to the water and challenges them to combat, exactly resembles one of the lawless giants of the Morte Arthur. The courtesy of the Greek hero contrasts well with the barbarian's violence; and when they come to blows, it is good to observe how address, agility, training, nerve enable Polydeuces to overcome with ease the vast fury and brute strength of the Bebrycian bully. As the fight proceeds, the son of Leda improves in flesh and colour, while Amycus gets out of breath, and sweats his thews away. Polydeuces pounds the giant's neck and face, reducing him to a hideous mass of bruises, and receiving the blows of Amycus upon his chest and loins. At the end of the fight he spares his prostrate foe, on the condition of his respecting the rites of hospitality

and dealing courteously with strangers. Throughout it will be noticed how carefully Theocritus maintains the conception of the Hellenic as distinguished from the barbarian combatant. Christian and Pagan are not more distinct in a legend of the San Graal. But Greek chivalry has no magic, no monstrous exaggeration. All is simple, natural, and human. Bellerophon, it is true, was sent after the Chimæra, and Perseus freed Andromeda like St. George from a dragon's mouth. But these fancies of Greek infancy formed no integral part of artistic mythology ; instead of being multiplied, they were gradually winnowed out, and the poets laid but little stress upon them.

The achievement of Castor is not so favourable to the character of Hellenic chivalry. Having in concert with Polydeuces born off by guile the daughters of Leucippus from their affianced husbands, Castor kills one of the injured lovers who pursues him and demands restitution. He slays him, though he is his own first cousin, ruthlessly; and while the other son of Aphareus is rushing forward to avenge his brother's death, Zeus hurls lightning and destroys him. Theocritus remarks that it is no light matter to engage in battle with the Tyndarids; but he makes no reflection on what we should call "the honour" of the whole transaction.

Of all the purely pastoral Idylls by which Theocritus is most widely famous perhaps the finest is the seventh, or *Thalysia*. It glows with the fresh and radiant splendour of southern beauty. In this poem the Idyllist describes the journey of three young men in summer from the city to the farm of their friend Phrasidamus, who has asked them to take part in the feast with which he proposes to honour Demeter at harvest time. On their way they meet with a goat-herd, Lycidas, who invites them, "with a smiling eye," to recline beneath the trees and while away the hours of noon-tide heat with song. "The very lizard," he says, "is sleeping by the wall; but on the hard stones of the footpath your heavy boots keep up a ceaseless

ringing." Thus chided by the goat-herd they resolve upon a singing match between Simichidas, the teller of the tale, and Lycidas, who offers his crook as the prize of victory. Lycidas begins the contest with that exquisite song to Ageanax, which has proved the despair of all succeeding Idyllists, and which furnished Virgil with one of the most sonorous lines in his *Georgics*. No translation can do justice to the smooth and liquid charm of its melodious verse, in which the tenderest feeling mingles gracefully with delicate humour and with homely descriptions of a shepherd's life. The following lines, forming a panegyric on Comatas, some famed singer of the rustic muse, may be quoted for their pure Greek feeling. Was ever an unlucky mortal envied more melodiously, and yet more quaintly, for his singular fortune ?

αἰσεῖ δ' ὥς ποκ' ἔδεκτο τὸν αἰπόλον εὐρέα λάρναξ
 ζῶν ἐόντα κακῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἀνακτος ·
 ὥς τέ νιν αἰ σιμαὶ λειμωνόθε φέρβον λοῖσαι
 κέδρον ἐς ἀδείαν μαλακοῖς ἀνθεοσι μέλισσαι ·
 οὐνεκά οἱ γλυκὺ Μοῖσα κατὰ στόματος χέει νέκταρ.
 ὦ μακαριστὲ Κομάτα, τὸ θῆν τάδε τερπνὰ πεπόνθης,
 καὶ τὸ κατεκλάσθης ἐς λάρνακα, καὶ τὸ, μελισσᾶν
 κηρία φερβόμενος, ἔτος ὥριον ἐξετέλεσσας.*

The song with which Simichidas contends against his rival is not of equal beauty ; but the goat-herd hands him the crook "as a gift of friendship from the Muses." Then he leaves the three friends, who resume their journey till they reach the house of

* "How of old

The goat-herd by his cruel lord was bound,
 And left to die in a great chest ; and how
 The busy bees, up coming from the meadows,
 To the sweet cedar, fed him with soft flowers,
 Because the Muse had filled his mouth with nectar.
 Yes, all these sweets were thine, blessed Comatas ;
 And thou wast put into the chest, and fed
 By the blithe bees, and passed a pleasant time."

LEIGH HUNT'S *Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla*.

Phrasidamus. There elms and poplar-trees and vines embower them with the pleasant verdure of rustling leaves and the perfumes of summer flowers and autumn fruits. The jar of wine as sweet as that which made the Cyclops dance among his sheepfold, spreads its fragrance through the air; while the statue of Demeter, with her handfuls of corn and poppy-heads, stands smiling by.

This seventh Idyll, of which no adequate idea can be conveyed by mere description, may serve as the type of those purely rustic poems which since the days of Theocritus have from age to age been imitated by versifiers emulous of his gracefulness. If space allowed, it would not be uninteresting to analyze the Idyll of the two old fishermen, who gossip together so wisely and contentedly in their hut by the sea-shore, mending their nets the while, and discoursing gravely of their dreams. In this Idyll, which is however possibly the work of one of Theocritus's imitators, and in the second, which consists of a singing match between two harvest-men, the native homeliness of the Idyllic muse appears to best advantage.

With this brief and insufficient notice, I must leave Theocritus in order to say a few words about his successors. Bion's poetry, when compared with that of Theocritus, declines considerably from the Bucolic type. His Idylls are for the most part fragments of delicately finished love-songs, remarkable for elegance and sweetness more than for masculine vigour or terse expression. In Bion the artificial style of pastoral begins. Theocritus had made cows and pipes and shepherds fashionable. His imitators followed him, without the humour and natural taste which rendered his pictures so attractive. We already trace the frigid affectation of Bucolic interest in the elegy on Bion: "He sang no song of wars or tears, but piped of Pan and cowherds, and fed flocks, singing as he went; pipes he fashioned, and milked the sweet-breathed heifer, and taught

kisses, and cherished in his bosom love, and stole the heart of Aphrodite." As it happens, the most original and powerful of Bion's remaining poems is a "Song of Tears," of passionate lamentation, of pathetic grief, composed, not as a pastoral ditty, but on the occasion of one of those splendid festivals in which the Syrian rites of slain Adonis were celebrated by Greek women. The ἐπιτάφιος Ἀδωνιδος is written with a fiery passion and a warmth of colouring peculiar to Bion. The verse bounds with tiger leaps, its full-breathed dactyls panting with the energy of rapid flight. The tender and reflective beauty of Theocritus, the concentrated passion of his Simætha, and the flowing numbers of his song to Adonis are quite lost and swallowed up in the Asiatic fury of Bion's lament. The poem begins with the cry Αἰάζω τὸν Ἀδωνιν, which is variously repeated in Idyllic fashion as a refrain throughout the lamentation.* After this prelude, having as it were struck the key-note to the music, the singer cries :

μηκέτι πορφυρέοις ἐνὶ φάρεσι Κύπρι κάθειυδε ·
 ἔγρεο δειλαία κυανόστολε καὶ πλατάγησον
 στάθεα, καὶ λέγε πᾶσιν, ἀπόλετο καλὸς Ἀδωνις.†

Notice how the long words follow one another with quick pulses and flashes of sound. The same peculiar rhythm recurs when, after describing the beautiful dead body of Adonis, the poet returns to Aphrodite :

ἂ δ' Ἀφροδίτα
 λυσαμένα πλοκαυίδας ἀνὰ δρυμῶς ἀλάληται
 πενθαλέα, νήπλεκτος, ἀσάνδαλος· αἱ δὲ βάτοι νιν
 ἐρχομέναν κείροντι καὶ ἱερὸν αἶμα δρέπονται.

* This ought probably to be printed, after Ahrens, αἰάζ' ὦ τὸν Ἀδωνιν. The exclamation occurs in a fragment of Sappho [Bergk, No. 63], whose lyric on the legend of Adonis may have suggested Bion's Idyll.

† "Sleep, Cypris, no more, on thy purple-strewed bed ;
 Arise, wretch stoled in black,—beat thy breast unrelenting,
 And shriek to the worlds, 'Fair Adonis is dead.'"

Translation by Mrs. BARRETT BROWNING.

δὲν δὲ κωκύοισα δι' ἄγκεα μακρὰ φορεῖται,
 Ἀσσύριον βοῶσα πόσιν, καὶ παῖδα καλεῖσα.*

There are few passages of poetical imagery more striking than this picture of the queen of beauty tearing through the forest, heedless of her tender limbs and useless charms, and calling on her Syrian lover. What follows is even more passionate; after some lines of mere description, the ecstasy again descends upon the poet, and he bursts into the wildest of most beautiful laments :—

ὥς ἴδεν, ὥς ἐνόησεν Ἀδώνιδος ἄσχετον ἔλκος,
 ὥς ἴδε φοῖνιον αἶμα μαραιομένῳ περὶ μηρῷ,
 πάχους ἀμπετάσασα κινύρετο · μείνον Ἀδωνι,
 δύσποτμε μείνον Ἀδωνι, κ.τ.λ.†

The last few lines of her soliloquy are exquisitely touching, especially those in which Aphrodite deploras her immortality, and acknowledges the supremacy of the queen of the grave over Love and Beauty. What follows is pitched at a lower key. There is too much of merely Anacreontic prettiness about the description of the bridal bed and the lamenting Loves. Aphrodite's passion reminds us of a Neapolitan *Stabat Mater*, in which the frenzy of love and love-like piety are strangely blended. But the concluding picture suggests nothing nobler than a painting of Albano, in which *amoretti* are plentiful, and

-
- * “ And the poor Aphrodité, with tresses unbound,
 All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks mournful and shrill
 Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing her feet
 Gather up the red flower of her blood, which is holy,
 Each footstep she takes ; and the valleys repeat
 The sharp cry which she utters, and draw it out slowly.
 She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian.”

Translation by Mrs. BARRETT BROWNING.

- † “ When, ah ! ah !— she saw how the blood ran away
 And empurpled the thigh ; and, with wild hands flung out,
 Said with sobs, ‘ Stay, Adonis ! unhappy one, stay ! ’”—*Ibid.*

there is much elegance of composition. This remark applies to the rest of Bion's poetry. If Theocritus deserves to be illustrated by the finest of Greek bas-reliefs, Bion cannot claim more than an exquisitely chiselled gem. Certainly the second and third fragments are very charming ; and the lines to Hesper (fragment 16) have so much beauty that I attempt a version of them :—

“ Hesper, thou golden light of happy love,
 Hesper, thou holy pride of purple eve,
 Moon among stars, but star beside the moon,
 Hail, friend ! and since the young moon sets to-night
 Too soon below the mountains, lend thy lamp
 And guide me to the shepherd whom I love.
 No theft I purpose ; no wayfaring man
 Belated would I watch and make my prey ;
 Love is my goal, and Love how fair it is,
 When friend meets friend sole in the silent night,
 Thou knowest, Hesper ! ”

In Moschus we find less originality and power than belong to Bion. His *Europa* is an imitation of the style in which Theocritus wrote *Hylas* ; but the copy is frigid and affected by the side of its model. Five-and-twenty lines for instance are devoted to an elaborate description of a basket, which leaves no very definite impression on the mind ; * whereas every leaf and tendril on the cup which Theocritus introduces into the first Idyll stands out vividly before us. Nothing, moreover, could be more unnatural and tedious than the long speech which Europa makes when she is being carried out to sea upon the bull's back. Yet we must allow that there is spirit and beauty in the triumph of sea monsters who attend Poseidon and do honour to the chosen bride of Zeus ; Nereids riding on dolphins, and Tritons, “ the deep-voiced minstrels of the sea,

* This basket for holding flowers, the work of Hephæstus, had the tale of Io carved upon it. So Catullus, in the counterpane of Thetis, has wrought in needlework the story of Ariadne, and Statius in the mantle given by Adrastus to Admetus has woven that of Hero and Leander. Both of these Roman poets beat Moschus in picturesque effect.

sounding a marriage song on their long-winding conchs." * The whole of this piece is worthy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Moschus is remarkable for occasional felicities of language. In this line for example,

εὔτε καὶ ἀτρεκέων ποιμαίνεται ἔθνος οὐνείρων,

an old thought receives new and subtle beauty by its expression. If *Megara* (Idyll iv.) be really the work of Moschus, which is doubtful, it reflects more honour on him. The dialogue between the wife and mother of the maddened Heracles, after he has murdered his children and gone forth to execute fresh labours, is worthy of their tragic situation. "Ἐρως δραπέτης, (Runaway Love), again is an exquisite little poem in the Anacreontic style of Bion, fully equal to any of its models. The fame of Moschus will, however, depend upon the Elegy on Bion. I have already hinted that its authorship is questioned. In my opinion it far surpasses any of his compositions in respect of definite thought and original imagination. Though the Bucolic common-places are used with obvious artificiality, and much is borrowed from Theocritus' Lament for Daphnis, yet so true and delicate a spirit is imbreathed into the old forms as to render them quite fresh. The passage which begins αἱ αἱ ταὶ μαλάχαι every dabbler in Greek literature knows by heart. And what can be more ingeniously pathetic than the *nuances* of feeling expressed in these lines :—

φάρμακον ἦλθε, Βίων, ποτὶ σὸν στόμα· φάρμακον εἶδες.
πῶς τευ τοῖς χεῖλεσσι ποτέδραμε κοῦκ ἐγλυκάνθη ;
τίς δὲ βροτός τοσσούτον ἀνάμερος ἢ κεράσαι τοι
ἦ δοῦναι λαλέοντι τὸ φάρμακον ; †

* Italian art of the Renaissance in the designs of Mantegna and Raphael and Giulio Romano, did full justice to these marine triumphs.

† "There came, O Bion, poison to thy mouth,
Thou didst feel poison ! how could it approach
Those lips of thine, and not be turned to sweet ?"

LEIGH HUNT.

And :—

τίς ποτε σῆ σύριγγι μελίζεται, ὦ τριπόθητε ;
 τίς δ' ἐπὶ σοῖς καλάμοις θήσει στόμα ; τίς θρασὺς οὕτως ;
 εἰσέτι γὰρ πνέει τὰ σὰ χεῖλεα καὶ τὸ σὸν ἄσθμα .
 ἄχῳ δ' ἐν δονάκεσσι τεῶς ἐπιβόσκει' αἰοδᾶς.*

Or again :—

ἄχῳ δ' ἐν πέτρῃσιν ὀδύρεται ὅττι σιωπῇ,
 οὐκέτι μιμεῖται τὰ σὰ χεῖλεα.†

There is also something very touching in the third line of this strophe :—

κεῖνος ὁ ταῖς ἀγέλαισιν ἐράσμιος οὐκέτι μέλπει,
 οὐκέτ' ἐρημαίῃσιν ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ἤμενος ᾄδει,
 ἀλλὰ παρὰ Πλουτῇ μέλος Ληθαῖον αἰεῖδει,‡

and in the allusion made to the Sicilian girlhood of grim Persephone (126-129). This vein of tender and melodious sentiment, which verges on the *conceits* of modern art, seems different from the style of *Europa*.

To English readers, the three elegies, on Daphnis, on Adonis, and on Bion, severally attributed to Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, will always be associated with the names of Milton and Shelley. There is no comparison whatever between Lycidas and Daphnis. In spite of the misplaced apparition of St. Peter, and of the frigidity which belongs to pastoral allegory, Lycidas is a richer and more splendid monument of elegiac verse. The simplicity of the Theocritean dirge contrasts

* "Who now shall play thy pipe, oh ! most desired one ;
 Who lay his lips against thy reeds ? who dare it ?
 For still they breathe f thee, and of thy mouth,
 And Echo comes to seek her voices there."—LEIGH HUNT.

† "Echo too mourned among the rocks that she
 Must hush, and imitate thy lips no longer."—*Ibid*.

‡ "No longer pipes he to the charmed herds,
 No longer sits under the lonely oaks,
 And sings ; but to the ears of Pluto now
 Tunes his Lethæan verse."—*Ibid*.

strangely with the varied wealth of Milton's imagery, the few ornaments of Greek art with the intricate embroideries of modern fancy. To quote passages from these well-known poems would be superfluous ; but let a student of literature compare the passages, $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\ \pi\omicron\kappa'\ \tilde{\alpha}\rho'\ \tilde{\eta}\sigma\theta'$ and $\tilde{\omega}\ \Pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \Pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ with Milton's paraphrase "Where were ye, nymphs,—" or the concise paragraphs about the flowers and valleys that mourned for Daphnis with the luxuriance of Milton's invocation "Return, Alpheus."

When Shelley wrote *Adonais*, his mind was full of the elegies on Bion and Adonis. Of direct translation in his Lament there is very little ; but he has absorbed both of the Greek poems, and transmuted them into the substance of his own mind. Urania takes the place of Aphrodite—the heavenly queen, "most musical of mourners," bewails the loss of her poetical consort. Instead of loves, the couch of Adonais is surrounded by the thoughts and fancies of which he was the parent ; and, instead of gods and goddesses, the power of nature is invoked to weep for him and take him to herself. Whatever Bion and Moschus recorded as a fact becomes, consistently with the spiritualizing tendency of modern genius, symbolical in Shelley's poem. His art has alchemized the whole structure, idealizing what was material, and disembodimenting the sentiments which were incarnated in simple images. *Adonais* is a sublime rhapsody ; its multitudinous ideas are whirled like drops of golden rain, on which the sun of the poet's fancy gleams with ever-changing rainbow hues. In drifts and eddies they rush past, delighting us with their rapidity and brilliancy ; but the impression left upon our mind is vague and incomplete, when compared with the few and distinct ideas presented by the Doric Elegies. At the end of *Alastor* there occurs a touching reminiscence of Moschus, but the outline is less faint than in *Adonais*, the transmutation even more complete.

Tennyson, among the poets of the nineteenth century, owes much to the Greek idyllists. His genius appears to be in many respects akin to theirs, and the age in which he lives is not unlike the Ptolemaic period. Unfitted, perhaps, by temperament for the most impassioned lyrics, he delights in minutely finished pictures, in felicities of expression and in subtle harmonies of verse. Like Theocritus, he finds in nature and in the legends of past ages subjects congenial to his muse. *Cenone* and *Tithonus* are steeped in the golden beauty of Syracusan art. "Come down, O maid," transfers, with perfect taste, the Greek idyllic feeling to Swiss scenery ; it is a fine instance of new wine being poured successfully into old bottles, for nothing can be fresher, and not even the *Thalysia* is sweeter. It would be easy enough to collect minor instances which prove that the Laureate's mind is impregnated with the thoughts and feelings of the poems I have been discussing. For instance, both the figure, "softer than sleep," and the comparison of a strong man's muscles to the smooth rush of running water over sunken stones, which we find in *Enid*, occur in Theocritus.

At the end of this Chapter I cannot refrain from once more recommending all lovers of pure verse and perfect scenery to study the Greek idyllists upon the shores of the Mediterranean. Nor would it be possible to carry a better guide-book to the statue-galleries of Rome and Naples. For in the verses of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, the æsthetic principles of the Greeks, in the age to which our relics of their statuary for the most part belong, are feelingly and pithily expressed ; while the cold marble, that seems to require so many commentaries, receives from their idyllic colouring new life.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANTHOLOGY.

The history of its Compilation.—Collections of Meleager, Philippus, Agathias, Cephalas, Planudes.—The Palatine MS.—The Sections of the Anthology.—Dedicatory Epigrams.—Simonides.—Epitaphs: Real and Literary.—Callimachus.—Epigrams on Poets.—Antipater of Sidon.—Hortatory Epigrams.—Palladas.—Satiric Epigrams.—Lucillius.—Amatory Epigrams.—Meleager, Straton, Philodemus, Antipater, Rufinus, Paulus Silentarius, Agathias, Plato.—Descriptive Epigrams.

THE Anthology may from some points of view be regarded as the most valuable relic of antique literature which we possess. Composed of several thousand short poems, written for the most part in the elegiac metre, at different times and by a multitude of authors, it is coextensive with the whole current of Greek history, from the splendid period of the Persian War to the decadence of Christianized Byzantium. Many subjects of interest in Greek life, which would otherwise have had to be laboriously illustrated from the historians or the comic poets, are here fully and melodiously set forth. If we might compare the study of Greek Literature to a journey in some splendid mountain region, then we might say with propriety that from the sparkling summits where Æschylus and Sophocles and Pindar sit enthroned, we turn in our less strenuous moods to gather the meadow flowers of Meleager, Palladas, Callimachus. Placing them between the leaves of the book of our memory, we possess an everlasting treasure of sweet thoughts, which will

serve in after-days to remind us of those scenes of Olympian majesty through which we travelled. The slight effusions of these minor poets are even nearer to our hearts than the masterpieces of the noblest Greek literature. They treat with a touching limpidity and sweetness of the joys and fears and hopes and sorrows that are common to all humanity. They introduce us to the actual life of a bygone civilization, stripped of its political or religious accidents, and tell us that the Greeks of Athens or of Sidon thought and felt exactly as we feel. Even the *Graffiti* of Pompeii have scarcely more power to reconstruct the past and summon as in dreams the voices and the forms of long-since buried men. There is yet another way in which the Anthology brings us closer to the Greeks than any other portion of their literature. The Lyrists express an intense and exalted mood of the race in its divine adolescence. The Tragedians exhibit the genius of Athens in its maturity. The Idyllists utter a rich nightingale note from the woods and fields of Sicily. But the Anthology carries us through all the phases of Hellenic civilization upon its uninterrupted undercurrent of elegiac melody. The clear fresh light of the morning, the splendour of noonday, the mellow tints of sunset, and the sad grey hues of evening are all there. It is a tree which bears the leaves and buds and blossoms and fruitage of the Greek spirit on its boughs at once. Many intervals in the life of the nation which are represented by no other portion of its literature—the ending for example of the first century before Christ—here receive a brilliant illustration. Again there is no more signal proof of the cosmopolitan nature of the later Greek culture than is afforded by the Anthology. From Rome, Alexandria, Palestine, Byzantium, no less than from the isles and continent of Greece, are recruited the poets, whose works are enshrined in this precious Golden Treasury of fugitive pieces.

The history of the Anthology is not without interest. By a

gradual process of compilation and accretion it grew into its present form from very slight beginnings. The first impulse to collect epigrams seems to have originated in connection with archæology. From the very earliest the Greeks were in the habit of engraving sentences, for the most part in verse, upon their temples, statues, trophies, tombs, and public monuments of all kinds. Many of these inscriptions were used by Herodotus and Thucydides as authorities for facts and dates. But about 200 B.C. one Polemon made a general collection of the authentic epigrams to be found upon the public buildings of the Greek cities. After him Alcetas copied the dedicatory verses at Delphi. Similar collections are ascribed to Mnestor and Apellas Ponticus. Aristodemus is mentioned as the compiler of the epigrams of Thebes. Philochorus performed the same service for Athens. Neoptolemus of Paros and the philosopher Euhemerus are also credited with similar antiquarian labours. So far, the collectors of epigrams had devoted themselves to historical monuments; and of their work, in any separate form at least, no trace exists. But Meleager of Gadara (B.C. 60) conceived the notion of arranging in alphabetical order a selection of lyric and erotic poetry, which he dedicated to his friend Diocles. He called this compilation by the name of *στέφανος*, or wreath, each of the forty-six poets whom he admitted into his book being represented by a flower. Philip of Thessalonica in the time of Trajan, following his example, incorporated into the garland of Meleager those epigrams which had acquired celebrity in the interval. About the same time or a little later, Straton of Sardis made a special anthology of poems on one class of subjects, which is known as the *μουσα παιδική*, and into which, besides ninety-eight of his own epigrams, he admitted many of the compositions of Meleager, Philip, and other predecessors. These collections belong to the classical period of Greek literature. But the Anthology, as we possess it, had not yet come into existence. It remained for Agathias,

a Byzantine Greek of the age of Justinian, to undertake a comprehensive compilation from all the previous collections. After adding numerous poems of a date posterior to Straton, especially those of Paulus Silentarius, Macedonius, Rufinus, and himself, he edited his *κύκλος ἐπιγραμμάτων*, divided into seven books. The first book contained dedicatory epigrams, the second descriptive poems, the third epitaphs, the fourth reflections on the various events of life, the fifth satires, the sixth erotic verses, the seventh exhortations to enjoyment. Upon the general outline of the Anthology as arranged by Agathias two subsequent collections were founded. Constantinus Cephalas, in the tenth century, at Byzantium, and in the reign of Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, undertook a complete revision and recombination of all pre-existing anthologies. With the patience of a literary bookworm, to whom the splendid libraries of the metropolis were accessible, he set about his work, and gave to the Greek Anthology that form which it now bears. But the vicissitudes of the Anthology did not terminate with the labours of Cephalas. Early in the fourteenth century a monk, Planudes, set to work upon a new edition. It appears that he contented himself with compiling and abridging from the collection of Cephalas. His principal object was to expurgate it from impurities and to supersede it by what he considered a more edifying text. Accordingly he emended, castrated, omitted, interpolated, altered, and remodelled at his own sweet will: “non magis disposuit quam mutilavit et ut ita dicam castravit hunc librum, detractis lascivioribus epigrammatis, ut ipse gloriatur,” says Lascaris in the preface to his edition of the Planudean Anthology.* He succeeded, however, to the height of his desire; for copies ceased to be made of the Anthology of Cephalas; and when Europe in the fifteenth century awoke to the study of

* He mutilated, and, so to speak, castrated this book quite as much as he arranged its contents, by withdrawing the more lascivious epigrams according to his own boast.

Greek literature, no other collection but that of Planudes was known. Fortunately for this most precious relic of antiquity, there did exist one exemplar of the Anthology of Cephalas. Having escaped the search of Poggio, Aurispa, Filelfo, Poliziano, and of all the emissaries whom the Medici employed in ransacking the treasure-houses of Europe, this unique manuscript was at last discovered in 1606 by Claude de Saumaise, better known as Milton's antagonist Salmasius, in the Palatine Library at Heidelberg. A glance at this treasure assured the young scholar—for Saumaise was then aged only twenty-two—that he had made one of the most important discoveries which remained within the reach of modern students. He spent years in preparing a critical edition of its text; but all his work was thrown away: for the Leyden publishers to whom he applied refused to publish the Greek without a Latin version, and death overtook him before he had completed the requisite labour. Meanwhile the famous Palatine MS. had been transferred, after the sack of Heidelberg in 1623, to the Vatican, as a present to Pope Gregory XV. Isaac Voss, the rival of Saumaise, induced one Lucas Langermann to undertake a journey to Rome, in order that he might make a faithful transcript of the MS. and publish it, to the annoyance of the great French scholar. But Saumaise dying in 1653, the work, undertaken from motives of jealousy, was suspended. The MS. reposed still upon the shelves of the Vatican Library; and in 1776 the Abbé Giuseppe Spalletti completed a trustworthy copy of its pages, which was bought by Ernest Duke of Gotha and Altenburg for his library. In the year 1797 the MS. itself was transferred to Paris after the treaty of Tolentino; and in 1815 it was restored to Heidelberg, where it now reposes. Meanwhile Brunck had published, from copies of this MS., the greater portion of the Anthology in his *Analecta Veterum Poetarum Græcorum*; and Jacobs between 1794 and 1814 had edited the whole collection with minutest accuracy upon

the faith of the Abbé Spalletti's exemplar. The edition of Didot, to which I shall refer in my examination of the Anthology,* is based not only on the labours of Brunck and Jacobs, but also upon the MSS. of the unfortunate Chardon de la Rochette, who, after spending many years of his life in the illustration of the Anthology of Cephalas, was forced in old age to sell his collections for a small sum. They passed in 1836 into the possession of the (then) Imperial Library.

The Palatine MS., which is our sole authority for the Anthology as arranged by Cephalas, is a 4to parchment of 710 pages. It has been written by different hands, at different times, and on different plans of arrangement. The index does not always agree with the contents, but seems to be that of an older collection, of which the one we possess is an imperfect copy. Yet Cephalas is often mentioned, and always with affectionate reverence, by the transcribers of the MS. In one place he is called ὁ μακάριος καὶ ἀείμνηστος καὶ τριπόθητος ἀνθρώπος, "the blessed man, who is ever to be held in thrice affectionate and longing recollection," the sentiment of which words we in the middle of this nineteenth century may most cordially echo.

The first section of the Anthology is devoted to Christian epigrams upon the chief religious monuments and statues of Byzantium. However these may interest the ecclesiastical student, they have no value for a critic of Greek poetry. The second section consists of a poem in hexameters upon the statues which adorned the gymnasium of Zeuxippus. Some conception may be formed, after the perusal of this very pedestrian composition, of the art-treasures which Byzantium contained in the fifth century. Authentic portraits of the great

* Paris, 1864-1872. The translations quoted by me are taken principally from the collections of Wellesley (*Anthologia Polyglotta*) and Burgess (Bohn's Series), and from the Miscellanies of the late J. A. Symonds, M.D. The versions contributed by myself have no signature.

poets and philosophers of Greece, as well as works of imagination illustrative of the *Iliad* and the Attic tragedies, might then be studied in one place of public resort. Byzantium had become a vast museum for the ancient world. The third section is devoted to mural inscriptions from the temple of Apollonis in Cyzicus. The fourth contains the prefaces of Meleager, Philip, and Agathias, to their several collections. The fifth, which includes 309 epigrams, is consecrated to erotic poetry. The sixth, which numbers 358, consists of a collection of inscriptions from temples and public monuments recording the illustrious actions of the Greeks or votive offerings of private persons. In the seventh we read 748 epitaphs of various sorts. The eighth carries us again into the dismal region of post-pagan literature: it contains nothing but 254 poems from the pen of Saint Gregory the Theologian. The 827 epigrams of the ninth section are called by their collector *ἐπιδεικτικά*; that is to say, they are composed in illustration of a variety of subjects, anecdotal, rhetorical, and of general interest. Perhaps this part of the whole Anthology has been the favourite of modern imitators and translators. Passing to the tenth section we find 126 semi-philosophical poems, most of which record the vanity of human life and advise mortals to make the best of their brief existence by enjoyment. The eleventh is devoted to satire. It is here that the reflex influence of Latin on Greek literature is most perceptible. The twelfth section bears the name of Straton, and exhibits in its 258 epigrams the morality of ancient Hellas under the aspect which has least attraction for modern readers. The thirteenth embraces a few epigrams in irregular metres. The fourteenth is made up of riddles and oracles. The fifteenth again has half a century of poems which could not well be catalogued elsewhere. The sixteenth contains that part of the Planudean collection which does not occur in our copy of the Anthology of Cephalas. It may be mentioned in

conclusion that, with one or two very inconsiderable exceptions, none of the poems of the early Greek lyrists and Gnostic writers are received into the so-called Anthology.

To the student of Greek history and Greek customs, no section of the Anthology is more interesting than that which includes the ἐπιγράμματα ἀναθηματικά, the record of the public and the private votive-offerings in Hellas. Here, as in a scroll spread out before us, in the silver language of the great Simonides,* may be read the history of the achievements of the Greeks against Xerxes and his hosts. The heroes of Marathon, the heroes of Thermopylæ, Megistias the soothsayer, Leonidas the king, Pausanias the general, the seamen of Salamis, the Athenian cavalry, the Spartans of Plataea, all receive their special tribute of august celebration at the hands of the poet who best knew how to suit simple words to splendid actions. Again the στήλη which commemorated in Athens the patriotic tyrannicide of Aristogeiton, the statue of Pan which Miltiades after Marathon consecrated in honour of his victory, the trophies erected by Pausanias at Delphi to Phœbus, the altar to Zeus Eleutherios dedicated in common by all the Greeks, the tripod sent to Delphi by Gelon and the other tyrants of Sicily after their victory over the Carthaginians, for each and all of these Simonides was called on to compose imperishable verse. Our heart trembles even now when we read such lines as these : †

* I have spoken of these compositions of Simonides as though they all belonged to the Dedicatory Epigrams. A large number of them are, however, incorporated among the Epitaphs proper.

† "To those of Lacedæmon, stranger, tell,
That, as their laws commanded, here we fell."

JOHN STERLING.

There is no very good translation of this couplet. The difficulty lies in the word ῥήμασι. Is this equivalent to ῥήτρας, as Cicero who renders it by *legibus* seems to think? Or is it the same as *orders*?

ὦ ξεῖν' ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῇδε
κείμεθα τοῖς κείνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.

And who does not feel that the grandeur of the occasion exalts above all suspicion of prosiness the frigid simplicity of the following? *

τόνδε ποθ' Ἕλληνες ῥώμῃ χερὸς, ἔργῳ Ἄρης,
εὐτόλμῳ ψυχῇς λήματι πειθόμενοι,
Πέρσας ἐξελάσαντες, ἐλεύθερον Ἑλλάδι κόσμον
ιδρύσαντο Διὸς βωμὸν Ἐλευθερίου.

But it is not merely within the sphere of world-famous history that the Dedicatory Epigrams are interesting. Multitudes of them introduce us to the minutest facts of private life in Greece. We see the statues of gods hung round with flowers and scrolls, the shrines filled with waxen tablets, wayside chapels erected to Priapus or to Pan, the gods of the shore honoured with dripping clothes of mariners, the Paphian home of Aphrodite rich with jewels and with mirrors and with silks suspended by devout adorers of both sexes. A fashionable church in modern Italy—the Annunziata at Florence, for example, or St. Anthony at Padua—is not more crowded with pictures of people saved from accidents, with silver hearts and waxen limbs, with ribands and artificial flowers, with rosaries and precious stones, and with innumerable objects that only tell their tale of bygone vows to the votary who hung them there, than were the temples of our Lady of Love in Cneidos or in Corinth. In the epigrams before us we read how hunters hung their nets to Pan, and fishermen their gear to Poseidon; gardeners their figs and pomegranates to Priapus; blacksmiths their hammers and tongs to Hephæstus. Stags are dedicated to Artemis and Phœbus, and corn-sheaves to

* “What time the Greeks with might and warlike deed,
Sustained by courage in their hour of need,
Drove forth the Persians, they to Zeus that frees
This altar built, the free fair pride of Greece.”

Demeter, who also receives the plough, the sickle, and the oxen of farmers. A poor man offers the produce of his field to Pan ; the firstfruits of the vine are set aside for Bacchus and his crew of satyrs ; Pallas obtains the shuttle of a widow who resolves to quit her life of care and turn to Aphrodite ; the eunuch Alexis offers his cymbals, drums, flutes, knife, and golden curls to Cybele. Phœbus is presented with a golden cicada, Zeus with an old ash-spear that has seen service, Ares with a shield and cuirass. A poet dedicates roses to the maids of Helicon and laurel wreaths to Apollo. Scribes offer their pens and ink and pumice-stone to Hermes ; cooks hang up their pots and pans and spits to the Mercury of the kitchen. Withered crowns and revel-cups are laid upon the shrine of Lais : Anchises suspends his white hair to Aphrodite, Endymion his bed and coverlid to Artemis, Daphnis his club to Pan. Agathias inscribes his *Daphniaca* to the Paphian queen. Prexidiké has an embroidered dress to dedicate. Alkibié offers her hair to Heré, Lais her mirror to Aphrodite, Krobylus his boy's curls to Apollo, Charixenos his long tresses to the nymphs. Meleager yields the lamp of his love-hours to Venus ; Lucillius vows his hair after shipwreck to the sea-gods ; Evanthé gives her thyrsus and stag's hide to Bacchus. Women erect altars to Eleithuia and Asclepius after childbirth. Sophocles dedicates a thanksgiving shrine for poetic victories. Simonides and Bacchylides record their triumphs upon votive tablets. Gallus, saved from a lion, consecrates his hair and vestments to the queen of Dindymus. Prostitutes abandon their ornaments to Kupris on their marriage. The effeminate Statullion bequeaths his false curls and flutes and silken wardrobe to Priapus. Sailors offer a huge cuttlefish to the sea-deities. An Isthmian victor suspends his bit, bridle, spurs, and whip to Poseidon. A boy emerging into manhood leaves his petasos and strigil and chlamys to Hermes, the god of games. Phryné dedicates a winged Erôs

as the firstfruits of her earnings. Hadrian celebrates the trophies erected by Trajan to Zeus. Theocritus writes inscriptions for Uranian Aphrodite in the house of his friend Amphilochus, for the Bacchic tripod of Damomenes, and for the marble muse of Xenocles. Erinna dedicates the picture of Agatharkis. Melinna, Sabæthis, and Mitylus are distinguished by poems placed beneath their portraits. There is even a poem on the picture of a hernia dedicated apparently in some Asklepeian shrine; and a traveller erects the brazen image of a frog in thanksgiving for a draught of wayside water. Cleonymus consecrates the statues of the nymphs :

αἱ τὰδε βένθη
ἀμβρόσιαι ῥοδαῖς στείβετε ποσσὶν ἀέλ.

“Ambrosial nymphs, who always tread these watery deeps with roseate feet.”

It will be seen by this rapid enumeration that a good many of the Dedicatory Epigrams are really epideictic or rhetorical; that is to say, they are written on imaginary subjects. But the large majority undoubtedly record such votive offerings as were common enough in Greece with or without epigrams to grace them.

What I have just said about the distinction between real and literary epigrams composed for dedications, applies still more to the epitaphs. These divide themselves into two well-marked classes—(I.) actual sepulchral inscriptions or poems written immediately upon the death of persons contemporary with the author; and (II.) literary exercises in the composition of verses appropriate to the tombs of celebrated historical or mythical characters. To the first class belong the beautiful epitaphs of Meleager upon Clearesta (i. 307), upon Heliodora (i. 365), upon Charixenos, a boy 12 years old (i. 363), upon Antipater of Sidon (i. 355), and the three which he designed for his own grave (i. 352). Callimachus has left some perfect

models in this species of composition. The epitaph on Heracleitus, a poet of Halicarnassus, which has been exquisitely translated by the author of *Ionica*, has a grace of movement and a tenderness of pathos that are unsurpassed : *

εἰπέ τις, Ἡράκλειτε, τὸν μόνον, ἐς δέ με δάκρυ
ἤγαγεν, ἐμνήσθην δ' ὁσσάκις ἀμφοτέροι
ἥλιον ἐν λέσχη κατεδύσαμεν· ἀλλὰ σὺ μέν που,
ξεῖν' Ἀλικαρνησεῦ, τετράπαλαι σποδισή·
αἱ δὲ τεαλ ζώουσιν ἀηδόνες, ἦσιν ὁ πάντων
ἄρπακτῆς Ἀΐδης οὐκ ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλεῖ.

His epitaph on the sea-wrecked Sopolis (i. 325), though less touching, opens with a splendid note of sorrow : †

ᾠφέλε μῆδ' ἐγένοντο θαλὲ νέες· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἡμεῖς
παῖδα Διοκλείδου Σώπολιν ἐστένομεν·
νῦν δ' ὁ μὲν εἰν ἁλί που φέρεται νέκυσ· ἀντὶ δ' ἐκείνου
οὐνομα καὶ κενὸν σῆμα παρερχόμεθα.

The following couplet upon Saon (i. 360) is marked by its perfection of brevity : ‡

τᾷδε Σάων ὁ Δίκωνος Ἀκάνθιος ἱερὸν ὕπνον
κοιμᾶται· θνάσκειν μὴ λέγε τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς.

- * “They told me, Heracleitus, they told me you were dead ;
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept, as I remembered, how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

“And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake,
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.”

- † “Would that swift ships had never been ; for so
We ne’er had wept for Sopolis : but he
Dead on the waves now drifts ; while we must go
Past a void tomb, a mere name’s mockery.”

- ‡ “Here lapped in hallowed slumber Saon lies,
Asleep, not dead ; a good man never dies.”

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

Among the genuine epitaphs by the greatest of Greek authors, none is more splendid than Plato's upon Aster (i. 402) : *

Ἄστηρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζῳοῖσιν Ἐφῶς
νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις Ἐσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.

To Plato also is ascribed a fine monumental epigram upon the Eretrian soldiers who died at Ecbatana (i. 322) : †

οἶδε ποτ' Αἰγαίοιο βαρύβρομον οἶδμα λιπόντες
Ἐκβατάνων πεδίῳ κείμεθ' ἐνὶ μεσάτῳ.
χαῖρε κλυτὴ ποτε πατρὶς Ἐρέτρια · χαίρετ' Ἀθῆναι
γείτονες Εὐβοίης · χαῖρε θάλασσα φίλη.

Erinna's epitaph on Baucis (i. 409) deserves quotation, because it is one of the few pieces accepted by the later Greeks, but probably without due cause, as belonging to a girl whose elegiacs were rated by the ancients above Sappho's : ‡

στᾶλαι καὶ Σειρῆνες ἐμαὶ καὶ πένθιμε κρωσσέ
ὅστις ἔχεις Ἀῖδα τὰν ὀλίγαν σποδιὰν,
τοῖς ἐμὸν ἐρχομένοισι παρ' ἡρίον εἵπατε χαλρεῖν,
αἶτ' ἄστοι τελέθωντ' αἶθ' ἑτέρας πόλιος ·

-
- * "Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled ;
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus giving
New splendour to the dead."

SHELLEY.

- † "We who once left the Ægean's deep-voiced shore,
Lie 'neath Ecbatana's champaign, where we fell.
Farewell Eretria, thou famed land of yore,
And, neighbour Athens, and loved sea, farewell."

- ‡ "Pillars of death, carved Sirens, tearful urns,
In whose sad keeping my poor dust is laid,
To him, who near my tomb his footsteps turns,
Stranger or Greek, bid hail ; and say a maid
Rests in her bloom below ; her sire the name
Of Baucis gave ; her birth and lineage high ;
And say her bosom friend Erinna came
And on this tomb engraved her elegy."

ELTON.

χῶτι με νύμφαν εἶσαν ἔχει τάφος εἰπάτε καὶ τό·
 χῶτι πατήρ μ' ἐκάλει Βαυκίδα χῶτι γένος
 Τηνία, ὡς εἰδῶντι· καὶ ὅττι μοι ἅ συνεταιρίσ
 "Ηρινν' ἐν τύμβῳ γράμμ' ἐλ' ἀράξε τόδε.

Sappho herself has left the following lament for the maiden Timas (i. 367) : *

Τιμάδος ἄδε κόνις, τὰν δὴ πρὸ γάμοιο θανοῦσαν
 δέξατο Φερσεφόνας κυάνεος θάλαμος,
 ἅς καὶ ἀποφθιμένας πᾶσαι νεοθᾶγι σιδᾶρψ
 ἄλικες ἱμερτὰν κρατὶς ἔθεντο κόμαν.

In each of these epitaphs, the untimely fading of a flower-like maiden in her prime has roused the deepest feeling of the poetess. This indeed is the chord which rings most truly in the sepulchral lyre of the Greeks. Their most genuine sorrow is for youth cut off before the joys of life were tasted. This sentiment receives, perhaps, its most pathetic though least artistic expression in the following anonymous epitaph on a young man. The mother's love and anguish are set forth with a vividness which we should scarcely have expected from a Greek (i. 336) : †

νηλεὲς ᾧ δαῖμον, τί δέ μοι καὶ φέγγος ἔδειξας
 εἰς ὀλίγων ἐτέων μέτρα μινυνθάδια ;
 ἥ ἵνα λυπῆσθης δι' ἐμὴν βιότοιο τελευτὴν
 μητέρα δειλαίην δάκρυσι καὶ στοναχαῖς,
 ἥ μ' ἔτεχ' ἥ μ' ἀτίτηλε καὶ ἥ πολὺν μείζονα πατρὸς
 φροντίδα παιδείης ἤνυσεν ἡμετέρης ;

* "This is the dust of Timas, whom unwed
 Persephone locked in her darksome bed :
 For her the maids who were her fellows, shore
 Their curls and to her tomb this tribute bore."

† "Merciless heaven ! why didst thou show me light
 For so few years and speedy in their flight ?
 Was it to vex by my untimely death
 With tears and wailings her who gave me breath ?
 Who bore me, and who reared me, and who wrought
 More for my youth with many a careful thought,

ὅς μὲν γὰρ τυτθὸν τε καὶ ὀρφανὸν ἐν μεγάρουσι
 κάλλιπεν · ἡ δ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ πάντας ἔτλη καμάτους.
 ἦ μὲν ἐμοὶ φίλον ἦεν ἐφ' ἀγνῶν ἡγεμονίῳ
 ἐμπρεπέμεν μύθοις ἀμφὶ δικασπολίας·
 ἀλλὰ μοι οὐ γενύων ἐπεδέξατο κούριμον ἄνθος
 ἡλικίης ἐρατῆς, οὐ γάμον, οὐ δαΐδας·
 οὐχ ὑμέναιον ἔεισε περικλυτὸν, οὐ τέκος εἶδε,
 δύσποτμος, ἐκ γενεῆς λείψανον ἡμετέρης,
 τῆς πολυθρηνήτου · λυπεῖ δέ με καὶ τεθνεῶτα
 μητρὸς Πωλίττης πένθος ἀεζόμενον,
 Φρόντωνος γοεραῖς ἐπὶ φροντίσιν, ἥ τέκε παῖδα
 ὠκύμορον, κενὸν χάρμα φίλης πατρίδος.

The common topic of consolation in these cases of untimely death is the one which Shakspeare has expressed in the Dirge for Fidele, and D'Urfey in his Dirge for Chrysostom by these four lines :

“Sleep, poor youth, sleep in peace,
 Relieved from love and mortal care ;
 Whilst we that pine in life's disease,
 Uncertain-blessed, less happy are.”

Lucian, speaking of a little boy who died at five years of age (i. 332), makes him cry :

ἀλλὰ με μὴ κλαίοις· καὶ γὰρ βιότοιο μετέσχον
 παύρου καὶ παύρων τῶν βιότοιο κακῶν.

A little girl in another epitaph (i. 366) says to her father :

ἴσχεο λύπας,
 Θειόδοτε· θνατοὶ πολλάκι δυστυχέες.

Than my dead sire : he left me in his hall
 An orphan babe : 'twas she alone did all.
 My joy it was beneath grave men of laws,
 Just pleas to urge and win approved applause ;
 But from my cheek she never plucked the flower
 Of charming youth, nor dressed my bridal bower,
 Nor sang my marriage hymn, nor saw, ah me !
 My offspring shoot upon our ancient tree,
 That now is withered. Even in the tomb
 I wail Politta's woe, the gloom on gloom
 That swells her grief for Phronton ; since a boy
 In vain she bore, his country's empty joy.”

A young man, dying in the prime of life, is even envied by Agathias (i. 384) :

ἔμπης ὄλβιος οὗτος, ὃς ἐν νεότητι μαρανθεῖς
ἔκφυγε τὴν βίτου θάσσον ἀλιτροσύνην.

But it is not often that we hear in the Greek Anthology a strain of such pure and Christian music as this apocryphal epitaph on Proté : *

οὐκ ἔθανες, Πρώτη, μετέβης δ' ἐς ἀμείνονα χώρον,
καὶ ναίεις μακάρων νήσους θαλίῃ ἐνι πολλῇ,
ἐνθα κατ' Ἑλυσίων πεδίων σκιρτώσα γέγηθας
ἄνθεις ἐν μαλακοῖσι, κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων ·
οὐ χεიმῶν λυπεῖ σ', οὐ καῦμ', οὐ νοῦσος ἐνοχλεῖ,
οὐ πεινῆς, οὐ δίψος ἔχει σ' · ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ποθεινὸς
ἀνθρώπων ἔτι σοι βίотος · ζῶεις γὰρ ἀμέμπτως
αὐγαῖς ἐν καθαραῖσιν Ὀλύμπου πλῆσιον ὄντος.

Death at sea touched the Greek imagination with peculiar vividness. That a human body should toss, unburied, unhonoured, on the waves, seemed to them the last indignity. Therefore the epitaphs on Satyrus (i. 348), who exclaims :

κείνῳ δινῆεντι καὶ ἀπρυγέτῳ ἔτι κείμει
ὑδαὶ μαινομένῳ μεμφόμενος Βορέη,

and on Lysidiké (i. 328), of whom Zenocritus writes :

χαῖται σου στάζουσιν ἔθ' ἀλμυρὰ δύσμορε κούρη
ναηγὲ φθιμένης εἰν ἀλί Λυσιδίκη,

-
- * "Thou art not dead, my Proté ! thou art flown
To a far country better than our own ;
Thy home is now an Island of the Blest ;
There 'mid Elysian meadows take thy rest :
Or lightly trip along the flowery glade,
Rich with the asphodels that never fade !
Nor pain, nor cold, nor toil, shall vex thee more,
Nor thirst, nor hunger on that happy shore ;
Nor longings vain (now that blest life is won)
For such poor days as mortals here drag on ;
To thee for aye a blameless life is given
In the pure light of ever-present Heaven."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

and on the three athletes who perished by shipwreck (i. 342), have a mournful wail of their own. Not very different, too, is the pathos of Therimachus struck by lightning (i. 306) :*

αὐτόμαται δείλῃ ποτὶ ταῦλιον αἰ βόες ἦλθον
 ἐξ ὕρεος πολλῇ νιφόμεναι χιόνι·
 αἰαῖ, Θηρίμαχος δὲ παρὰ δρυὶ τὸν μακρὸν εὖδει
 ὕπνον· ἐκοιμήθη δ' ἐκ πυρὸς οὐρανοῦ.

It is pleasant to turn from these to epitaphs which dwell more upon the qualities of the dead than the circumstances of their death. Here is the epitaph of a slave (i. 379) :†

Ζωσίμη ἥ πρὶν ζοῦσα μόνῳ τῷ σώματι δούλη
 καὶ τῷ σώματι νῦν εὖρεν ἐλευθερίην.

Here is a buffoon (i. 380) :‡

Νηλεΐδης 'Αἰδης· ἐπὶ σοὶ δ' ἐγέλασσε θανόντι,
 Τίτῦρε, καὶ νεκύων θῆκὴ σε μιμολόγον.

Of all the literary epitaphs by far the most interesting are those written for the poets, historians, and philosophers of Greece. Reserving these for separate consideration I pass now to mention a few which belong as much to the pure epigram as to the epitaph. When, for example, we read two very clever poems on the daughters of Lycambes (i. 339), two again on a comically drunken old woman (i. 340, 360), and five on a man who has been first murdered and then buried by his murderer (i. 340), we see that, though the form of the epitaph has been adopted, clever rhetoricians, anxious only to display their skill, have been at work in rivalry. Sardanapalus, the eponym of Oriental luxury, furnishes a good subject for this style of

* "Home to their stalls at eve the oxen came
 Down from the mountain through the snow-wreaths deep ;
 But ah, Therimachus sleeps the long sleep
 'Neath yonder oak, lulled by the levin-flame."

† "She who was once but in her flesh a slave
 Hath for her flesh found freedom in the grave."

‡ "Hades is stern ; but when you died, he said,
 Smiling, ' Be jester still among the dead.'"

composition. His epitaph runs thus in the Appendix Planudea (ii. 532):*

εἶδ' ὅς τις θνητὸς ἔφυς, τὸν θυμὸν ἄεξε
 τερπόμενος θαλίῃσι· θανόντι σοι οὔτις ὕνησις·
 καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ σποδὸς εἰμι, Νίνου μεγάλης βασιλεύσας.
 τόσσ' ἔχω ὅσος' ἔφαγον καὶ ἐφύβρισα, καὶ μετ' ἔρωτος
 τέρπν' ἐδάην· τὰ δὲ πολλὰ καὶ ὕλβια κεῖνα λείλειπται.
 ἥδε σοφῇ βιότοιο παραίνεσις ἀνθρώποισιν.

We find only the fourth and fifth lines among the sepulchral epigrams of the Anthology of Cephalas (i. 334), followed by a clever parody composed by the Theban Crates. Demetrius, the Spartan coward, is another instance of this rhetorical exercise. Among the two or three which treat of him I quote the following (i. 317):†

ἀνίκε' ἀπὸ πτολέμου τρέσσαντά σε δέξατο μήτηρ,
 πάντα τὸν ὀπλιστὰν κόσμον ὀλωλεκότα,
 αὐτὰ τοι φονίαν, Δαμάτριά, αὐτίκα λόγχαν
 εἶπε διὰ πλατέων ὥσαμένα λαγόνων·
 κάταθε, μηδ' ἐχέτω Σπάρτα ψόγον· οὐ γὰρ ἐκεῖνα
 ἤμπλακεν, εἰ δειλοὺς τοῦμὸν ἔθρεψε γάλα.

Agathias writes a very characteristic elegy on Lais (i. 315):‡

ἔρπων εἰς Ἐφύρην τάφον ἔδρακον ἀμφὶ κέλευθον
 Λαΐδος ἀρχαίης, ὥς τὸ χάραγμα λέγει·

- * "Know well that thou art mortal : therefore raise
 Thy spirit high with long luxurious days.
 When thou art dead, thou hast no pleasure then.
 I too am earth, who was a king of men
 O'er Nineveh. My banquets and my lust
 And love-delights are mine e'en in the dust ;
 But all those great and glorious things are flown.
 True doctrine for man's life is this alone."

- † "When homeward cowering from the fight you ran
 Without or sword or shield, a naked man,
 Your mother then, Demetrius, through your side
 Plunged her blood-drinking spear, nor wept, but cried :
 Die ; let not Sparta bear the blame ; but she
 Sinned not, if cowards drew their life from me !"

- ‡ "Travelling to Ephyré, by the road-side
 The tomb and name of Lais I espied :

δάκρυ δ' ἐπισπείσας, χαίροις γύναι, ἐκ γὰρ ἀκουῆς
οἰκτείρω σέ γ', ἔφην, ἣν πάρος οὐκ ἰδόμεν·
ᾧ πόσον ἡϊθέων νόον ἤκαχες· ἀλλ' ἴδε Λήθην
ναίεις, ἀγλαῖην ἐν χθονὶ κατθεμένη.

An epitaph on the inutility of epitaphs is an excellent novelty, especially when the witty poet (Paulus Silentarius) has the humour to make the ghost eager to speak while the wayfarer is inattentive (i. 332) : *

οὐνομά μοι. τί δὲ τοῦτο ; πατρὶς δέ μοι. ἐς τί δὲ τοῦτο ;
κλεινοῦ δ' εἰμὶ γένους. εἰ γὰρ ἀφανροτάτου ;
ζήσας δ' ἐνδόξως ἔλιπον βίον. εἰ γὰρ ἀδόξως ;
κεῖμαι δ' ἐνθάδε νῦν. τίς τίني ταῦτα λέγεις ;

The value of the epitaphs on poets and great men of Greece is this—that, besides being in many cases of almost perfect beauty, they contain the quintessence of ancient criticism. Every epithet is carefully so chosen as to express what the Greeks thought peculiar and appropriate to the spirit and the works of their heroes. Orpheus is the subject of the following exquisite elegy by Antipater of Sidon (i. 274) : †

οὐκέτι θελγομένης, Ὀρφεῦ, δρύας, οὐκέτι πέτρας
· ἄξεις, οὐ θηρῶν αὐτονόμους ἀγέλας·
οὐκέτι κοιμάσεις ἀνέμων βρόμον, οὐχὶ χάλαζαν,
οὐ νιφετῶν συρμούς, οὐ παταγεῦσαν ἄλα.

I wept and said : ‘ Hail, queen, the fame of thee,
Though ne’er I saw thee, draws these tears from me ;
How many hearts for thee were broken, how
By Lethe lustreless thou liest now ! ”

- * “ My name, my country—what are they to thee ?
What, whether base or proud my pedigree ?
Perhaps I far surpassed all other men ;
Perhaps I fell below them all ; what then ?
Suffice it, stranger ! that thou seest a tomb ;
Thou know’st its use ; it hides—no matter whom.”

W. COWPER.

- † “ Orpheus ! No more the rocks, the woods no more,
Thy strains shall lure ; no more the savage herds,
Nor hail, nor driving clouds, nor tempest’s roar,
Nor chafing billows list thy lulling words ;

ὦλεο γάρ· σὲ δὲ πολλὰ κατωδύραντο θύγατρ^{ες}
 Μναμοσύνας, μάτηρ δ' ἔξοχα Καλλιόπα·
 τὶ φθιμένοις στοναχεῦμεν ἐφ' υἰάσιν, ἀνίκ' ἀλαλκεῖν
 τῶν παίδων Ἀίδην οὐδὲ θεοῖς δύναμιν ;

Sophocles receives a gift of flowers and ivy, and quiet sleep from Simmias the Theban (i. 277) :*

ἡρέμ' ὑπὲρ τύμβοιο Σοφοκλέος, ἡρέμα, κισσέ,
 ἔρπύζοις, χλοεροῦς ἐκπροχέων πλοκάμους,
 καὶ πέταλον πάντῃ θάλλοι ῥόδον, ἥ τε φιλορῶξ
 ἄμπελος, ὑγρὰ πέριξ κλήματα χευαμένη,
 εἵνεκεν εὐεπίης πινυτόφρονος, ἣν ὁ μελιχρὸς
 ἥσκησεν Μουσέων ἄμμιγα καὶ Χαρίτων.

Among the nine epitaphs on Euripides none is more delicate than the following by Ion (i. 282) :†

χαῖρε μελαμπετάλοισ, Εὐριπίδῃ, ἐν γυάλοισι·
 Πιερίας τὸν ἀεὶ νυκτὸς ἔχων θάλαμον·
 ἴσθι δ' ὑπὸ χθονὸς ὦν, ὅτι σοι κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται
 Ἴσον Ὀμηρεῖαις ἀνέοις χάρισιν.

Where could a poet be better lulled to rest than among the black-leaved hollows of Pieria? But the most touching tribute

For thou art dead : and all the muses mourn,
 But most Calliope, thy mother dear.
 Shall we then, reft of sons, lament forlorn,
 When e'en the Gods must for their offspring fear?"

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

* "Wind, gentle evergreen, to form a shade
 Around the tomb where Sophocles is laid ;
 Sweet ivy, wind thy boughs, and intertwine
 With blushing roses and the clustering vine :
 Thus will thy lasting leaves, with beauties hung,
 Prove grateful emblems of the lays he sung ;
 Whose soul, exalted like a God of wit,
 Among the Muses and the Graces writ."

Anon.

† "Hail, dear Euripides, for whom a bed
 In black-leaved vales Pierian is spread :
 Dead though thou art, yet know thy fame shall b
 Like Homer's green through all eternity."

to Euripides is from the pen of a brother dramatist, the comic poet Philemon (ii. 94) : *

εἰ ταῖς ἀληθείαισιν οἱ τεθνηκότες
αἴσθησιν εἶχον, ἄνδρες ὥς φασὶν τινες,
ἀπηγξάμην ἂν ὥστ' ἰδεῖν Εὐριπίδην.

Aristophanes is praised by Antipater of Thessalonica (ii. 37) as the poet who laughed and hated rightly :

κωμικὴ καὶ στύξας ἄξια καὶ γελάσας.

His plays are characterized as full of fearful graces, φοβερῶν πληθόμενοι χαρίτων. Over the grave of Anacreon, who receives more tributes of this kind than any other poet, roses are to bloom, and wine is to be poured, and the thoughts of Smerdies, Bathyllus, and Megistias are to linger. Antipater of Sidon in particular paid honour to his grave (i. 278) : †

θάλλοι τετρακόρυμβος, Ἀνάκρεον, ἀμφὶ σὲ κισσὸς
ἀβρὰ τέ λειμώνων πορφυρέων πέταλα ·
πηγαὶ δ' ἀργινέεντος ἀναθλίβονται γάλακτος,
εὐῶδες δ' ἀπὸ γῆς ἥδ' ἔχειτο μέθυ,
ὕφρα κέ τοι σποδιῇ τε καὶ ὀστέα τέρψιν ἄρηται,
εἰ δὴ τις φθιμένοις χρίμπτεται εὐφροσύνα,

* “ If it be true that in the grave the dead
Have sense and knowledge, as some men assert,
I'd hang myself to see Euripides.”

† “ Around the tomb, O bard divine !
Where soft thy hallowed brow reposes,
Long may the deathless ivy twine,
And summer pour his waste of roses !

“ And many a fount shall there distil,
And many a rill refresh the flowers ;
But wine shall gush in every rill,
And every fount yield milky showers.

“ Thus, shade of him whom nature taught
To tune his lyre and soul to pleasure,
Who gave to love his warmest thought,
Who gave to love his fondest measure ;

ὦ τὸ φίλον στέρξας, φίλε, βάρβιτον, ὦ σὺν αἰοιδᾷ
πάντα διαπλώσας καὶ σὺν ἔρωτι βίον.

The same poet begins another epitaph thus :

τύμβος Ἀνακρείοντος · ὁ Τηϊὸς ἐνθάδε κύκνος
εὔδει χη παίδων ζωροτάτη μανίη.

Less cheerful are the sepulchres of the satirists. We are bidden not to wake the sleeping wasp upon the grave of Hipponax (i. 350) :*

ὦ ξεῖνε, φεῦγε τὸν χαλαζεπῇ τάφον
τὸν φρικτὸν Ἰππώνακτος, οὔτε χὰ τέφρα
ιαμβιάζει Βουπάλειον ἐς στύγος,
μή πως ἐγείρης σφήκα τὸν κοιμώμενον,
ὅς οὐδ' ἐν ᾄδῃ νῦν κεκοίμικεν χόλον,
σκάζουσι μέτροις ὀρθὰ τοξεύσας ἔπη.

The same thought is repeated with even more of descriptive energy, in an epitaph on Archilochus (i. 287) :†

σῆμα τόδ' Ἀρχιλόχου παραπόντιον, ὅς ποτε πικρὴν
μοῦσαν ἐχιδναίῳ πρῶτος ἔβαψε χόλῳ,
αἰμάξας Ἑλικῶνα τὸν ἡμερον · οἶδε Λυκάμβης
μυρόμενος τρισσῶν ἄμματα θυγατέρων ·
ἡρέμα δὴ παρὰ μειψον, ὁδοιπύρε, μή ποτέ τοῦδε
κινήσῃς τύμβῳ σφήκας ἐφεζομένους.

“Thus, after death, if spirits feel,
Thou mayest, from odours round thee streaming,
A pulse of past enjoyment steal,
And live again in blissful dreaming.”

T. MOORE.

* “Stranger, beware ! This grave hurls words like hail :
Here dwells the dread Hipponax, dealing bale.
E'en 'mid his ashes, fretful, poisonous,
He shoots Iambics at slain Bupalus.
Wake not the sleeping wasp : for though he's dead,
Still straight and sure his crooked lines are sped.”

† “Here sleeps Archilochus by the salt sea ;
Who first with viper's gall the muse did stain,
And bathed mild Helicon with butchery.
Lycambes weeping for his daughters three
Learned this. Pass then in silence : be not fain
To stir the wasps that round his grave remain.”

Diogenes offers similar opportunities for clever writing. The best of his epitaphs is this well-known but anonymous dialogue (i. 285) : *

εἰπέ, κύων, τίνος ἀνδρὸς ἐφ'εστῶς σῆμα φυλάσσεις ;
τοῦ κυνός · ἀλλὰ τίς ἦν οὗτος ἀνὴρ ὁ Κύνων ;
Διογένης. γένος εἰπέ. Σινωπέυς, ὃς πίθον ᾤκει ;
καὶ μάλα · νῦν δὲ θανὼν ἀστέρας οἶκον ἔχει.

The epitaphs on Erinna, who died when she was only nineteen, are charged with the thought which so often recurs when we reflect on poets like Chatterton untimely slain ;—what would not they have done, if they had lived ? (i. 275) : †

ὁ γλυκὺς Ἡρίνης οὗτος πόνος, οὐχὶ πολλὸς μὲν
ὥς ἂν παρθενικῶς ἐννεακαιδεκέτευσ,
ἀλλ' ἐτέρων πολλῶν δυνατώτερος· εἰ δ' Ἀΐδας οἱ
μὴ ταχὺς ἦλθε, τίς ἂν ταλίκον ἔσχ' ὄνομα ;

Sappho rouses a louder strain of celebration (i. 276) : ‡

Σαπφῷ τοι κεύθεις χθὼν Αἰολὶ τὰν μετὰ Μούσαις
ἀθανάταις θνατὰν Μοῦσαν ἀειδομένην,
ἂν Κύπρις καὶ Ἔρως σὺν ἄμ' ἔτραφον, ἃς μέτα Πειθῶ
ἔπλεκ' ἀείζων Πιερίδων στέφανον,
Ἑλλαδι μὲν τέρψιν, σοὶ δὲ κλέος · ᾧ τριέλικτον
Μοῦραι δινεῦσαι νῆμα κατ' ἡλακάτας,

-
- * “ Tell me, good dog, whose tomb you guard so well ?
The Cynic's. True : but who that Cynic, tell.
Diogenes, of fair Sinope's race.
What ! He that in a tub was wont to dwell ?
Yes : but the stars are now his dwelling-place.”

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

- † “ These are Erinna's songs : how sweet, though slight !—
For she was but a girl of nineteen years :—
Yet stronger far than what most men can write :
Had Death delayed, whose fame had equalled hers ?”

- ‡ “ Does Sappho then beneath thy bosom rest,
Æolian earth ? that mortal Muse confessed
Inferior only to the choir above,
That foster-child of Venus and of Love ;
Warm from whose lips divine Persuasion came,
Greece to delight, and raise the Lesbian name ?

πῶς οὐκ ἐκλώσασθε πανάφθιτον ἡμᾶρ αἰοιδῶ
ἄφθιτα μῆσαμένα δῶρ' Ἑλικωνιάδων ;

This is the composition of Antipater of Sidon, who excels in this special style. Without losing either the movement or the passion of poetry, he is always delicate and subtle in his judgments. His epigrams on Pindar are full of fire (i. 280) :*

Περικὰν σάλπιγγα, τὸν εὐαγέων βαρὺν ὕμνων
χαλκευτὰν, κατέχει Πίνδαρον ἅδε κόνις,
οὗ μέλος εἰσαῖων φθέγγαιό κεν, ὥς ποτε Μουσῶν
ἐν Κάδμου θαλάμοις σμήνος ἀνεπλάσατο.

The very quintessence of criticism is contained in the phrases *σάλπιγξ, χαλκευτάς*. The Appendix Planudea (ii. 590) contains another epitaph on Pindar by Antipater, which for its beautiful presentation of two legends connected with his life deserves to be quoted :†

νεβρείων ὅπσον σάλπιγξ ὑπεριαχεν αὐλῶν,
τόσσον ὑπὲρ πάσας ἔκραγε σείο χέλυσ·
οὐδὲ μάτην ἀπαλοῖς περὶ χεῖλεσιν ἔσμυς ἐκείνος
ἔπλασε κηρόδετον, Πίνδαρε, σείο μέλι.
μάρτυς ὁ Μαινάλιος κερόεις θεὸς ὕμνον αἰείσας
τὸν σέο καὶ νομίῳ λησάμενος δονάκων.

O ye, who ever twine the three-fold thread,
Ye Fates, why number with the silent dead
That mighty songstress, whose unrivalled powers
Weave for the Muse a crown of deathless flowers ?”

FRANCIS HODGSON.

* “Piera’s clarion, he whose weighty brain
Forged many a hallowed hymn and holy strain,
Pindar, here sleeps beneath the sacred earth :
Hearing his songs a man might swear the brood
Of Muses made them in their hour of mirth,
What time round Cadmus’ marriage-bed they stood.

† “As the war-trumpet drowns the rustic flute,
So when your lyre is heard all strings are mute :
Not vain the labour of those clustering bees
Who on your infant lips spread honey-dew ;
Witness great Pan who hymned your melodies,
Pindar, forgetful of his pipes for you.”

It is impossible to do justice to all these utterances on the early poets.—Æschylus (i. 281) :

ὁ τραγικὸν φῶνημα καὶ ὀφρυνέσσαν ἀοιδὴν
πυργώσας στιβαρῇ πρῶτος ἐν εὐεπίῃ.

Alcman (i. 277) :

τὸν χαρίεντ' Ἀλκμᾶνα, τὸν ὑμνητῆρ' ὑμεναίων
κύκνον, τὸν Μουσῶν ἄξια μελψάμενον.

Stesichorus (ii. 36) :

Ὅμηρικόν ὅς τ' ἀπὸ βῆμα
ἔσπασας οἰκείοις, Στησίχορ', ἐν καμάτοις.

Ibycus (ii. 36) :

ἡδύ τε Πειθοῦς,
Ἴβυκε, καὶ παίδων ἄνθος ἀμησάμενε.

Enough has been quoted to show the delicate and appreciative criticism of the later and lighter Greek poets for the earlier and grander. It is also consolatory to find that almost no unknown great ones are praised in these epigrams ; whence we may conclude that the masterpieces of Greek literature are almost as numerous now as they were in the age of Nero. The philosophers receive their due meed of celebration. Plato can boast of two splendid anonymous epitaphs (i. 285) : *

γαῖα μὲν ἐν κόλποις κρύπτει τόδε σῶμα Πλάτωνος,
ψυχὴ δ' ἀθάνατον τάξιν ἔχει μακάρων.

and—

αἰετέ, τίπτε βέβηκας ὑπὲρ τάφον ; ἢ τίνος, εἰπέ,
ἀστερόεντα θεῶν οἶκον ἀποσκοπέεις ;
ψυχῆς εἰμὶ Πλάτωνος ἀποπταμένης ἐς Ὀλυμπον
εἰκῶν · σῶμα δὲ γῇ γηγενὲς Ἀθλῆς ἔχει.

* “ Earth in her breast hides Plato's dust : his soul
The gods for ever 'mid their ranks enrol.”

and—

“ Eagle ! why soarest thou above the tomb ?
To what sublime and starry-paven home
Floatest thou ?
I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven : Athens does inherit
His corpse below.”

SHELLEY.

It is curious to find both Thucydides (ii. 119) and Lycophron (ii. 38) characterized by their difficulty.

Closely allied in point of subject to many of the epitaphs are the so-called hortatory epigrams, ἐπιγράμματα προτρεπικά. These consist partly of advice to young men and girls to take while they may the pleasures of the moment, partly of wise saws and maxims borrowed from the Stoics and the Cynics, from Euripides and the comic poets. Lucian and Palladas are the two most successful poets in this style. Palladas, whose life falls in the first half of the fifth century, a Pagan, who regarded with disgust the establishment of Christianity, attained by a style of "elegant mediocrity" to the perfection of proverbial philosophy in verse. When we remember that the works of Euripides, Menander, Philemon, Theophrastus, and the Stoics were mines from which to quarry sentiments about the conduct of life, we understand the general average of excellence below which he rarely falls and above which he never rises. Yet in this section, as in the others of the Anthology, some of the anonymous epigrams are the best. Here is one (ii. 251):*

εἰς αἶδην ἰθεῖα κατήλυσις, εἴτ' ἀπ' Ἀθηνῶν
στείχοις, εἴτε νέκυς, νύσαι ἐκ Μερόης ·
μὲ σέ γ' ἀνιάτω πάτρης ἀποτῆλε θανόντα ·
πάντοθεν εἰς ὃ φέρων εἰς αἶδην ἄνεμος.

Here is another, which repeats the old proverb of the cup and the lip (ii. 257):—

πολλὰ μεταξὺ πέλει κύλικος καὶ χείλεος ἔκρου.

-
- * "Straight is the way to Acheron,
Whether the spirit's race is run
From Athens or from Meroë:
Weep not, far off from home to die;
The wind doth blow in every sky,
That wafts us to that doleful sea."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

And another, on the difference between the leaders and the followers in the pomp of life (ii. 270) :—

πολλοί τοι νερθηκυφόροι παῦροι δέ τε βάκχοι.

Equally without author's name is the following excellent prayer (ii. 271) :*

Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ καὶ εὐχομένοις καὶ ἀνέγκτοις
ἄμμι δίδου· τὰ δὲ λυγρὰ καὶ εὐχομένων ἀπερύκοις.

Lucian gives the following good advice on the use of wealth (ii. 256) :†

ὥς τεθνηξόμενος τῶν σῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀπόλαυε,
ὥς δὲ βιωσόμενος φείδεο σῶν κτεάνων·
ἔστι δ' ἀνὴρ σοφὸς οὗτος ὃς ἄμφω ταῦτα νοήσας
φειδοῖ καὶ δαπάνη μέτρον ἐφηρμόσατο.

Agathias asks why we need fear death (ii. 264) :‡

τὸν θάνατον τί φοβεῖσθε, τὸν ἡσυχίης γενετῆρα,
τὸν παύοντα νόσους καὶ πενίης ὀδύνας ;
μῦνον ἅπαξ θνητοῖς παραγίνεται, οὐδὲ ποτ' αὐτὸν
εἶδέν τις θνητῶν δεύτερον ἐρχόμενον·
αἱ δὲ νόσοι πολλαὶ καὶ ποίκιλαι, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἄλλον
ἐρχόμεναι θνητῶν καὶ μεταβαλλόμεναι.

The remainder of my quotations from this section will all be

* “God, grant us good, whether or not we pray ;
But e'en from praying souls keep bad away.”

† “Your goods enjoy, as if about to die ;
As if about to live, use sparingly.
That man is wise, who, bearing both in mind,
A mean, befitting waste and thrift, can find.”

BURGESS.

‡ “Why shrink from Death, the parent of repose,
The cure of sickness and all human woes ?
As through the tribes of men he speeds his way,
Once, and but once, his visit he will pay ;
Whilst pale diseases, harbingers of pain,
Close on each other crowd—an endless train.”

W. SHEPHERD.

taken from Palladas. Here is his version of the proverb attributed to Democritus that life's a stage (ii. 265) : *

σκηνη πᾶς ὁ βίος καὶ παίγνιον · ἡ μάθε παίξειν
τὴν σπουδὴν μεταθεῖς ἢ φέρε τὰς ὑδύνας.

Here, again, is the old complaint that man is Fortune's plaything (ii. 266) : †

παίγνιον ἔστι τύχης μερόπων βίος, οἰκτρός, ἀλήτης,
πλούτου καὶ πενίης μεσσόθι ῥεμβόμενος.
καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατάγουσα πάλιν σφαιρηδὸν ἀείρει,
τοὺς δ' ἀπὸ τῶν νεφελῶν εἰς αἶθρα κατὰγει.

Here again, but cadenced in Iambics, is the Flight of Time (ii. 266) : ‡

ὦ τῆς βραχείας ἡδονῆς τῆς τοῦ βίου ·
τὴν ὀξύτητα τοῦ χρόνου πενήθησατε ·
ἡμεῖς καθεζόμεσθα καὶ κοιμώμεθα,
μοχθοῦντες ἢ τρυφῶντες · ὁ δὲ χρόνος τρέχει,
τρέχει καθ' ἡμῶν τῶν ταλαιπώρων βροτῶν,
φέρων ἐκάστου τῷ βίῳ καταστροφήν.

The next epigram is literally bathed in tears (ii. 267) : §

δακρυχέων γενόμεν καὶ δακρύσας ἀποθήσκω ·
δάκρυσι δ' ἐν πολλοῖς τὸν βίον εὖρον ὕλον.

* "All life's a scene, a jest : then learn to play,
Dismissing cares, or bear your pains away."

† "This wretched life of ours is Fortune's ball ;
'Twixt wealth and poverty she bandies all :
These, cast to earth, up to the skies rebound ;
These, tossed to heaven, come trembling to the ground."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

‡ "O for the joy of life that disappears !—
Weep then the swiftness of the flying years :
We sit upon the ground and sleep away,
Toiling or feasting ; but time runs for aye,
Runs a fell race against poor wretched man,
Bringing for each the day that ends his span."

§ "Tears were my birth-right ; born in tears,
In tears too must I die ;
And mine has been, through life's long years,
A tearful destiny.

ὦ γένος ἀνθρώπων πολυδάκρυτον, ἀσθενές, οἰκτρὸν,
φαινόμενον κατὰ γῆς καὶ διαλυόμενον.

When he chooses to be cynical, Palladas can present the physical conditions of human life with a crude brutality which is worthy of a monk composing a chapter *De Contemptu humanæ miseriæ*. It is enough to allude to the epigrams upon the birth (ii. 259) and the breath (ii. 265) of man. To this had philosophy fallen in the death of Grecæ. One more quotation from Palladas has a touch of pathos. The old order has yielded to the new : Theodosius has closed the temples : the Greeks are in ashes : their very hopes remain among the dead (ii. 268) :

“Ἕλληνές ἐσμεν ἄνδρες ἐσποδωμένοι,
νεκρῶν ἔχοντες ἐλπίδας τεθαμμένας·
ἀνεστράφη γὰρ πάντα νῦν τὰ πράγματα.

With this wail the thin lamentable voice of the desiccated rhetorician ceases.

Akin to these hortatory epigrams, in their tone of settled melancholy, are some of the satiric and convivial. It is necessary, when we think of the Greeks as the brightest and sunniest of all races, to remember what songs they sang at their banquets, and to comfort ourselves with the reflection that between their rose-wreaths and the bright Hellenic sky above them hung for them, no less than for ourselves, the cloud of death.

What more dismal drinking-song can be conceived than this ? (i. 337) : *

οὐδὲν ἁμαρτήσας γενόμεν παρὰ τῶν με τεκόντων·
γεννηθεὶς δ' ὁ τάλας ἔρχομαι εἰς Ἀΐδην·

“Such is the state of man ; from birth
To death all comfortless :
Then swept away beneath the earth
In utter nothingness.”

EDWARD STOKES.

* “My sire begat me ; ’twas no fault of mine :
But being born, in Hades I must pine :

ὦ μῆξις γονέων θανατηφόρος· ὦ μοι ἀνάγκης
 ἥ με προσπελάσσει τῷ στυγερῷ θανάτῳ·
 οὐδὲν ἐὼν γενόμην· πάλιν ἔσσομαι ὥς πάρος οὐδέν·
 οὐδὲν καὶ μηδὲν τῶν μερόπων τὸ γένος·
 λειπὸν μοι τὸ κύπελλον ἀποστίλβωσον, ἑταῖρε,
 καὶ λύπης ἀκονὴν τὸν βρόμιον πάρεχε.

The good sense of Cephalas placed it among the epitaphs; for in truth it is the quintessence of the despair of the grave. Yet its last couplet forces us to drag it from the place of tombs, and put it into the mouth of some late reveller of the decadence of Hellas. It has to my ear the ring of a drinking-song sung in a room with closed shutters, after the guests have departed, by some sad companion, who does not know that the dawn has gone forth, and the birds are aloft in the air. The shadow of night is upon him. Though Christ be risen and the sun of hope is in the sky, he is still as cheerless as Mimnermus. If space sufficed, it would be both interesting and profitable to compare this mood of the epigrammatists with that expressed by Omar Khayyám, the Persian poet of Khorassán, in whose quatrains philosophy, melancholy, and the sense of beauty are so wonderfully mingled that to surpass their pathos is impossible in verse.* Here is another of the same tone (ii. 287):†

ἥως ἐξ ἡοῦς παραπέμπεται, εἴτ' ἀμελούντων
 ἡμῶν ἐξαίφνης ἤξει ὁ πορφύρεος,

O birth-act that brought death! O bitter fate
 That drives me to the grave disconsolate!
 To nought I turn, who nothing was ere birth;
 For men are nought and less than nothing worth,
 Then let the goblet gleam for me, my friend;
 Pour forth care-soothing wine, ere pleasures end."

* See Fitzgerald's faultless translation of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám, published by Quaritch.

† "Morn follows morn; till while we careless play
 Comes suddenly the darksome king, whose breath

καὶ τοὺς μὲν τήξας, τοὺς δ' ὑπτήσας, ἐνίοις δὲ
φυσήσας, ἄξει πάντας ἐς ἐν βάραθρον.

And another with a more delicate ring of melancholy in the last couplet (ii. 289) : *

ὕπνώεις ὦ ταῖρε· τὸ δὲ σκύφος αὐτὸ βοᾷ σε·
ἔγρεο, μὴ τέρπου μοιριδὲρ μελέτη·
μὴ φείσῃ Διόδωρε· λάβρος δ' εἰς Βάκχον ὀλισθῶν
ἄχρις ἐπὶ σφαλεροῦ ζωροπότει γόνατος·
ἔσσεθ' ὅτ' οὐ πιόμυσθα, πολὺς πολὺς· ἀλλ' ἄγ' ἐπέιγουν.
ἡ συνετὴ κροτάφων ἄπτεται ἡμετέρων.

And yet another (ii. 294),† which sounds like the Florentine Carnival Song composed by Lorenzo de' Medici :

“Chi vuol esser lieto sia ;
Di doman non è certezza :”

πῖνε καὶ εὐφραίνου· τὴ γὰρ αὔριον ἢ τὴ τὸ μέλλον
οὐδεὶς γινώσκει· μὴ τρέχει, μὴ κοπία·
ὥς δύνασαι, χάρισαι, μετάδος, φάγε, θνητὰ λογίζου·
τὸ ζῆν τοῦ μὴ ζῆν οὐδὲν ὅλως ἀπέχει·
πᾶς ὁ βίος τοιόσδε ῥοπή μόνον· ἐν προλάβῃ σου
ἂν δὲ θάνῃς ἐτέρου πάντα· σὺ δ' οὐδὲν ἔχεις.

But the majority of the ἐπιγράμματα σκωπτικά, or jesting epigrams, are not of this kind. They are written for the most

Or wastes or burns or blows our life away,
But drives us all down to one pit of death.”

- * “Thou sleepest, friend : but see, the beakers call !
Awake, nor dote on death that waits for all.
Spare not, my Diodorus, but drink free
Till Bacchus loose each weak and faltering knee.
Long will the years be when we can't carouse—
Long, long : up then ere age hath touched our brows.”

- † “Drink and be merry. What the morrow brings
No mortal knoweth : wherefore toil or run ?
Spend while thou mayst, eat, fix on present things
Thy hopes and wishes : life and death are one.
One moment : grasp life's goods ; to thee they fall :
Dead, thou hast nothing, and another all.”

GOLDWIN SMITH.

part, in Roman style, on ugly old women, misers, stupid actors, doctors to dream of whom is death, bad painters, poets who kill you with their elegies, men so light that the wind carries them about like stubble, or so thin that a gossamer is strong enough to strangle them ; vices, meannesses, deformities of all kinds. Lucillius, a Greek Martial of the age of Nero, is both best and most prolific in this kind of composition. But of all the sections of the Anthology this is certainly the least valuable. The true superiority of Greek to Latin literature in all its species is that it is far more a work of pure beauty, of un-mixed poetry. In Lucillius the Hellenic muse has deigned for once to assume the Roman toga, and to show that if she chose, she could rival the hoarse-throated satirists of the empire on their own ground. But she has abandoned her lofty eminence, and descended to a lower level. The same may be said in brief about the versified problems and riddles (ii. pp. 467-490), which are not much better than elegant acrostics of this or the last century. It must, however, be remarked that the last-mentioned section contains a valuable collection of Greek oracles.

Of all the amatory poets of the Anthology, by far the noblest is Meleager. He was a native of Gadara in Palestine, as he tells us in an epitaph composed in his old age :

πάτρα δέ με τεκνοῖ
Ἀτθὶς ἐν Ἀσσυρίοις ναιομένα, Γάδαρα.*

It is curious to think of this town, which from our childhood we have connected with the miracle of the demoniac and the swine, as a Syrian Athens, the birthplace of the most mellifluous of all erotic songsters. Meleager's date is half a century or thereabouts before the Christian era. He therefore was ignorant of the work and the words of One who made the

* The country that gave birth to me is Gadara, an Attic city on Assyrian shores.

insignificant place of his origin world-famous. Of his history we know really nothing more than his own epigrams convey ; the two following couplets from one of his epitaphs record his sojourn during different periods of his life at Tyre and at Ceos :

ὄν θεόπαις ἤνδρωσε Τύρος Γαδάρων θ' ἱερὰ χθών·
 Κῶς δ' ἔρατῇ Μερόπων πρέσβυν ἐγηροτρόφει.
 Ἄλλ' εἰ μὲν Σύρος ἐσσί, Σάλαμ' εἰ δ' οὖν σύγῃ Φοῖνιξ,
 Ναίδιος· εἰ δ' Ἑλλήν, χαῖρε· τὸ δ' αὐτὸ φράσον.*

This triple salutation, coming from the son of Gadara and Tyre and Ceos, brings us close to the pure humanity which distinguished Meleager. Modern men, judging him by the standard of Christian morality, may feel justified in flinging a stone at the poet who celebrated his Muisco and his Diocles, his Heliodora and his Zenophila, in too voluptuous verse. But those who are content to criticise a pagan by his own rule of right and wrong, will admit that Meleager had a spirit of the subtlest and the sweetest, a heart of the tenderest, and a genius of the purest that has been ever granted to an elegist of earthly love. While reading his verse, it is impossible to avoid laying down the book and pausing to exclaim : How modern is the phrase, how true the passion, how unique the style ! Though Meleager's voice has been mute a score of centuries, it yet rings clear and vivid in our ears ; because the man was a real poet, feeling intensely, expressing forcibly and beautifully, steeping his style in the fountain of tender sentiment which is eternal. We find in him none of the cynicism which defiles Straton, or of the voluptuary's despair which gives to Agathias the morbid splendour of decay, the colours of corruption. All is simple, lively, fresh with joyous experience in his verse.

* Who grew to man's estate in Tyre and Gadara, and found a fair old age in Cos. If then thou art a Syrian, Salaam ! if a Phoenician, Naidios ! if a Hellene, Hail !

The first great merit of Meleager as a poet is limpidity. A crystal is not more transparent than his style; but the crystal to which we compare it must be coloured with the softest flush of beryl or of amethyst. Here is a little poem in praise of Heliodora (i. 85) : *

πλέξω λευκόιον, πλέξω δ' ἄπαλὴν ἄμα μύρτοις
 νάρκισσον, πλέξω καὶ τὰ γελῶντα κρίνα,
 πλέξω καὶ κρόκον ἡδύν· ἐπιπλέξω δ' ὑάκινθον
 πορφυρέην, πλέξω καὶ φιλέραστα ῥόδα,
 ὥς ἂν ἐπὶ κροτάφοις μυροβοστρήχου Ἑλιοδώρας
 εὐπλόκαμον χαίτην ἀνθοβολῇ στέφανος.

Nothing can be more simple than the expression, more exquisite than the cadence of these lines. The same may be said about the elegy on Clearisté (i. 307) : †

οὐ γάμον ἄλλ' Ἀΐδαν ἐπινυμφίδιον Κλεαρίστα
 δέξατο, παρθενίας ἄμματα λυομένα·
 ἄρτι γὰρ ἐσπέριοι νύμφας ἐπὶ δικλίσιν ἄχεν
 λωτοὶ καὶ θαλάμων ἐπλαταγεῦντο θύραι·
 ἡῶι δ' ὀλολυγμὸν ἀνέκραγον, ἐκ δ' Ὀρμέναιος
 σιγαθεὶς γοερὸν φθέγμα μεθαρμόσατο·
 αἱ δ' αὐταὶ καὶ φέγγος ἑδαδούχουν παρὰ παστῶ
 πεῦκαι, καὶ φθιμένα νέρθεν ἔφαινον ὁδόν.

-
- * “ I’ll twine white violets, and the myrtle green ;
 Narcissus will I twine, and lilies sheen ;
 I’ll twine sweet crocus, and the hyacinth blue ;
 And last I twine the rose, love’s token true :
 That all may form a wreath of beauty, meet
 To deck my Heliodora’s tresses sweet.”

GOLDWIN SMITH.

- † “ Poor Clearisté loosed her virgin zone
 Not for her wedding, but for Acheron ;
 ’Twas but last eve the merry pipes were swelling,
 And dancing footsteps thrilled the festive dwelling ;
 Morn changed those notes for wailings loud and long,
 And dirges drowned the hymeneal song ;
 Alas ! the very torches meant to wave
 Around her bridal couch, now light her to the grave ! ”

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

The thought of this next epigram recalls the song to Ageanax in Theocritus' 7th Idyll (ii. 402) : *

οὐριος ἐμπνεύσας ναύταις Νότος, ὦ δυσέρωτες,
 ἥμισύ μιν ψυχᾶς ἄρπασεν Ἀνδράγαθον·
 τρίς μάκαρες νᾶες, τρίς δ' ὕλβια κύματα πόντου,
 τετράκι δ' εὐδαίμων παιδοφορῶν ἄνεμος·
 εἴθ' εἴην δελφὶς ἔν' ἐμοῖς βαστακτὸς ἐπ' ὤμοις
 πορθμευθεὶς ἐσίδῃ τὰν γλυκύπαιδα Ῥόδον.

These quotations are sufficient to set forth the purity of Meleager's style, though many more examples might have been borrowed from his epigrams on the cicada, on the mosquitoes who tormented Zenophila, on Antiochus, who would have been Erôs if Erôs had worn the boy's petasos and chlamys. The next point to notice about him is the suggestiveness of his language, his faculty of creating the right epithets and turning the perfect phrase that suits his meaning. The fragrance of the second line in this couplet is undefinable but potent : †

ὦ δυσέρως ψυχῇ παῦσαί ποτε καὶ δι' ὀνείρων
 εἰδώλοισι κάλλευσ κωφὰ χλαινομένη.

It is what all day-dreamers and castle-builders, not to speak of the dreamers of the night, must fain cry out in their despair. The common motive of a lover pledging his absent mistress is elevated to a region of novel beauty by the passionate repetition of words in this first line : ‡

ἔγχει καὶ πάλιν εἰπὲ πάλιν πάλιν Ἡλιωδώρας.

-
- * "Fair blows the breeze : the seamen loose the sail :—
 O men that know not love, your favouring gale
 Steals half my soul, Andragathos from me !
 Thrice lucky ships, and billows of the sea
 Thrice blessed, and happiest breeze that bears the boy !
 O would I were a dolphin that my joy,
 Here on my shoulders ferried, might behold
 Rhodes, the fair island thronged with boys of gold !"

† "O soul too loving, cease at length from even in dreams thus idly basking in the warmth of Beauty's empty shapes."

‡ "Pour forth ; and again cry, again, and yet again, 'to Heliodora !'"

In the same way a very old thought receives new exquisite-ness in the last couplet of the epitaph on Heliodora : *

ἀλλά σε γουνοῦμαι γὰ παντρόφε τὰν πανόδυρτον
ἡρέμα σοῖς κόλποις μᾶτερ ἐναγκάλισαι.

The invocation to Night, which I will next quote, has its own beauty derived from the variety of images which are subtly and capriciously accumulated : †

ἐν τῷδε παμμήτειρα θεῶν λίτομαι σε φίλη Νύξ
ναὶ λίτομαι κώμων σύμπλανε πότνια Νύξ.

But Meleager's epithets for Love are perhaps the triumphs of his verbal coinage : ‡

ἔστι δ' ὁ παῖς γλυκύδακρυς αἰίλαλος ὥκῦς ἀταρβῆς
σιμὰ γελῶν πτερόεις νῶτα φαρετροφόρος.

Again he calls him ἀβροπέδιλος ἔρως (delicate-sandalled Love) and fashions words like ψυχαπάτης, ὑπναπάτης (soul-cheating and sleep-cheating), to express the qualities of the treacherous god. In some of his metaphorical descriptions of passion he displays a really fervid imagination. To this class of creation belong the poem on the Soul's thirst (ii. 414), on the memory of beauty that lives like a fiery image in the heart (ii. 413), and the following splendid picture of the tyranny of Love. He is addressing his soul, who has once again incautiously been trapped by Erôs : §

τί μάτην ἐνὶ δεσμοῖς
σπαίρεις ; αὐτὸς ἔρως τὰ πτερά σου δέδεκεν,

* "I pray thee, Earth, all-nourishing, in thy deep breast, O mother, to enfold her tenderly, for whom my tears must flow for aye."

† "This one boon I ask of thee, great mother of all gods, beloved Night ! Nay, I beseech thee, thou fellow wanderer with Revelry, O holy Night !"

‡ "The boy is honey-teared, tireless of speech, swift, without sense of fear, with laughter on his rogueish lips, winged, bearing arrows in a quiver on his shoulders."

§ "Why vainly in thy bonds thus pant and fret ? Love himself bound

καί σ' ἐπὶ πῦρ ἔστησε, μῦροισ δ' ἔρρανε λιπόπνουν,
δῶκε δὲ διψώσῃ δάκρυα θερμὰ πιεῖν.

Surely a more successful marriage of romantic fancy to classic form was never effected even by a modern poet. This line again contains a bold and splendid metaphor : *

κωμάζω δ' οὐκ οἶνον ὑπὸ φρένα πῦρ δὲ γεμισθείς.

Meleager had a soul that inclined to all beautiful and tender things. Having described the return of spring in a prolonged chant of joy, he winds up with words worthy of a Troubadour on Minnesinger in the April of a new age : †

πῶς οὐ χρὴ καὶ ἀοιδὸν ἐν εἵαρι καλὸν ἀεῖσαι ;

The cicada, *δροσεραῖς σταγόνεσσι μεθυσθείς* (drunken with honey-drops of dew), the *αὐτοφνὲς μίμημα λύρας* (nature's own mimic of the lyre)—a conceit by the way in the style of Marini or of Calderon—the bee whom he addresses as *ἀνθοῦδιαίτε μέλισσα* (flower-pasturing bee), and all the flowers for which he has found exquisite epithets, the *φίλομβρος νάρκισσος* (narcissus that loves the rain of heaven), the *φιλέραστα ῥόδα* (roses to lovers dear), the *οὐρεσίφοιτα κρίνα* (lilies that roam the mountain sides), and again *τὰ γελῶντα κρίνα* (laughing lilies), testify to the passionate love and to the purity of heart with which he greeted and studied the simplest beauties of the world.‡ In

thy wings and set thee on a fire, and rubbed thee, when thy breath grew faint, with myrrh, and when thou thirstedst, gave thee burning tears to drink."

* "A reveller I go freighted with fire not wine beneath the region of my heart."

† "How could it be that poet also should not sing fair songs in spring."

‡ Those who on the shores of the Mediteranean have traced out beds of red tulips or anemones or narcissus from terrace to terrace, over rocks, and under olive branches, know how delicately true to nature is the thought contained in the one epithet *οὐρεσίφοιτα*—roaming like nymphs along the hills—now single and now gathered into companies, as though their own sweet will had led them wandering.

dealing with flowers he is particularly felicitous. Most exquisite are the lines in which he describes his garland of the Greek poets and assigns to each some favourite of the garden or the field, and again those other couplets which compare the boys of Tyre to a bouquet culled by love for Aphrodite. *Βαῖα μὲν ἀλλὰ ῥόδα* (slight things perhaps, but roses) : these are the words in which Meleager describes the too few but precious verses of Sappho, and for his own poetry they have a peculiar propriety. *Τεαὶ ζῶουσιν ἀήδονες* (thy nightingales still live) we may say, quoting Callimachus, when we take leave of him. His poetry has the sweetness and the splendour of the rose, the rapture and full-throated melody of the nightingale.

Next in artistic excellence to Meleager among the amatory poets is Straton, a Greek of Sardis, who lived in the second century. But there are few readers who, even for the sake of his pure and perfect language, will be prepared to put up with the immodesty of his subject-matter. Straton is not so delicate and subtle in style as Meleager : but he has a masculine vigour and *netteté* of phrase peculiar to himself. It is not possible to quote many of his epigrams. He suffers the neglect which necessarily obscures those men of genius who misuse their powers. Yet the story of the garland-weaver (ii. 396), and the address to schoolmasters (ii. 219), are too clever to be passed by without notice. The following epigram on a picture of Ganymede gives a very fair notion of Straton's style (ii. 425) : *

στεῖχε πρὸς αἰθέρα δῖον, ἀπέρχεο παῖδα κομίζων
αἶετὲ, τὰς διφυεῖς ἐκπετάσας πτέρυγας,

-
- * "Soar upward to the air divine :
Spread broad thy pinions aquiline :
Carry amid thy plumage him,
Who fills Jove's beaker to the brim :
Take care that neither crookèd claw
Make the boy's thigh or bosom raw ;

στειῖχε τὸν ἄβρὸν ἔχων Γανυμήδεα, μηδὲ μεθείης
 τὸν Διὸς ἡδίστων οἶνοχόον κυλίκων ·
 φείδεο δ' αἰμᾶξαι κοῦρον γαμφώνυχι ταρσῶ
 μὴ Ζεὺς ἀλγήσῃ τοῦτο βαρυνόμενος.

To this may be added an exhortation to pleasure in despite of death (ii. 288).*

Callimachus deserves mention as a third with Meleager and Straton. His style, drier than that of Meleager, more elevated than Straton's, is marked by a frigidity of good scholarship which only at intervals warms into the fire of passionate poetry. In writing epigrams Callimachus was careful to preserve the pointed character of the composition. He did not merely, as is the frequent wont of Meleager, indite a short poem in elegiacs. This being the case, his love poems, though they are many, are not equal to his epitaphs.

To mention all the poets of the amatory chapters would be impossible. Their name is legion. Even Plato the divine, by right of this epigram to Aster : †

ἀστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς ἀστὴρ ἐμός · εἴθε γενοίμην
 οὐρανὸς ὥς πολλοῖς ὕμνασιν εἰς σὲ βλέπω—

and of this to Agathon : ‡

τὴν ψυχὴν Ἀγάθωνα φιλῶν ἐπὶ χεῖλεσιν ἔσχον ·
 ἦλθε γὰρ ἡ τλήμων ὥς διαβησομένη—

For Jove will wish thee sorry speed
 If thou molest his Ganymede."

- * "Drink now, and love, Democrates ; for we
 Shall not have wine and boys eternally :
 Wreath we our heads, anoint ourselves with myrrh
 Others will do this to our sepulchre :
 Let now my living bones with wine be drenched ;
 Water may deluge them when I am quenched."

- † "Gazing at stars, my star ? I would that I were the welkin,
 Starry with infinite eyes, gazing for ever at thee !"

FREDERICK FARRAR.

- ‡ "Kissing Helena, together
 With my kiss, my soul beside it
 Came to my lips, and there I kept it,—

takes rank in the erotic cycle. Yet we may touch in passing on the names of Philodemus and Antipater, the former a native of Gadara, the latter a Sidonian, whose epitaph was composed by Meleager. Their poems help to complete the picture of Syrian luxury and culture in the cities of North Palestine, which we gain when reading Meleager. Of Philodemus the liveliest epigram is a dialogue, which seems to have come straight from the pages of some comedy (i. 68) ; but the majority of his verses belong to that class of literature which finds its illustration in the Gabinetto Segreto of the Neapolitan Museum. Occasionally he strikes a true note of poetry, as in this invocation to the moon : *

νυκτερινὴ δίκερως φιλοπάννουχε φαίνει σελήνη,
φαίνει δι' εὐτρήτων βαλλομένη θυρίδων·
αὔραζε χρυσέην Καλλίστιον· ἐς τὰ φιλεύντων
ἔργα κατοπτεύειν οὐ φθόνος ἀθανάτη.
ὀλβίζεις καὶ τήνδε καὶ ἡμέας οἶδα σελήνη·
καὶ γὰρ σὴν ψυχὴν ἔφλεγεν Ἐνδυμίων.

Antipater shines less in his erotic poems than in the numerous epigrams which he composed on the earlier Greek poets, especially on Anacreon, Erinna, Sappho, Pindar, Ibycus. He lived at a period when the study of the lyrists was still flourishing, and each of his couplets contains a fine and thoughtful piece of descriptive criticism.

Another group of amatory poets must be mentioned. Agathias, Macedonius, and Paulus Silentarius, Greeks of Byzantium

For the poor thing had wandered thither,
To follow where the kiss should guide it,
Oh cruel I to intercept it ! ”

SHELLEY.

- * “ Shine forth, night-wandering, horned, and vigilant queen,
Through the shy lattice shoot thy silver sheen ;
Illumine Callistion : for a goddess may
Gaze on a pair of lovers while they play.
Thou enviest her and me, I know, fair moon,
For thou didst once burn for Endymion.”

about the age of Justinian, together with Rufinus, whose date is not quite certain, yield the very last fruits of the Greek genius, after it had been corrupted by the lusts of Rome and the effeminacy of the East. Very pale and hectic are the hues which give a sort of sickly beauty to their style. Their epigrams vary between querulous lamentations over old age and death, and highly coloured pictures of self-satisfied sensuality. Rufinus is a kind of second Straton in the firmness of his touch, the cynicism of his impudicity. The complaint of Agathias to the swallows that twittered at his window in early dawn (i. 102), his description of Rhodanthé and the vintage feast (ii. 297),* and those lines in which he has anticipated Jonson's lyric on the kiss which made the wine within the cup inebriating (i. 107), may be quoted as fair specimens of his style. Of Paulus Silentarius I do not care to allude to more than the poem in which he describes the joy of two lovers (i. 106). What Ariosto and Boiardo have dwelt on in some of their most brilliant episodes, what Giorgione has painted in the eyes of the shepherd who envies the kiss given by Rachel to Jacob, is here compressed into eighteen lines of great literary beauty. But a man need be neither a prude nor a Puritan to turn with sadness and with loathing from these last autumnal blossoms on the tree of Greek beauty. The brothel and the grave are all that is left for Rufinus and his contemporaries. Over the one

* "We trod the brimming wine-press ankle-high,
Singing wild songs of Bacchic revelry :
Forth flowed the must in rills ; our cups of wood
Like cockboats swam upon the honeyed flood :
With these we drew, and as we filled them, quaffed,
With no warm Naiad to allay the draught :
But fair Rhodanthé bent above the press,
And the fount sparkled with her loveliness :
We in our souls were shaken ; yea, each man
Quaked beneath Bacchus and the Paphian.
Ah me ! the one flowed at our feet in streams—
The other fooled us with mere empty dreams !"

hangs the black shadow of death ; the other is tenanted by ghosts of carnal joy :

“ when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish acts of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.” *

One large section of the Anthology remains to be considered. It contains what are called the *ἐπιγράμματα ἐπιδεικτικά*, or poems upon various subjects chosen for their propriety for rhetorical exposition. These epigrams, the favourites of modern imitators, display the Greek taste in this style of composition to the best advantage. The Greeks did not regard the epigram merely as a short poem with a sting in its tail—to quote the famous couplet :

“Omne epigramma sit instar apīs : sit aculeus illi :
Sint sua mella : sit et corporis exigui.” †

True to the derivation of the word, which means an inscription or superscription, they were satisfied if an epigram were short and gifted with the honey-dews of Helicon.‡ Meleager would

* *Comus*, 463, &c.

† “Three things must epigrams, like bees, have all ;
A sting and honey and a body small.”

RILEY.

‡ A certain Cyril gives this as his definition of a good epigram (ii. 75 compare No. 342 on p. 69) :

*πάγκαλόν ἐστ' ἐπίγραμμα τὸ δίστιχον · ἣν δὲ παρέλθῃς
τοὺς τρεῖς, βαψθεῖς κοῦκ ἐπίγραμμα λέγεις.*

“Two lines complete the epigram—or three :
Write more ; you aim at epic poetry.”

have called his collection a Beehive, and not a Flower-garland, if he had acknowledged the justice of the Latin definition which has just been cited. The epigrams of which I am about to speak are simply little occasional poems, fugitive pieces, *Gelegenheitsgedichte*, varying in length from two to twenty lines, composed in elegiac metre, and determined, as to form and treatment, by the exigencies of the subject. Some of them, it is true, are noticeable for their point; but point is not the same as sting. The following panegyric of Athens, for example, approximates to the epigram as it is commonly conceived (ii. 13): *

γῆ μὲν ἔαρ κόσμος πολυδένδρεος, αἰθέρι δ' ἄστρον,
'Ελλάδι δ' ἦδε χθών, οἷδε δὲ τῇ πόλει.

The same may be said about the lines upon the vine and the goat (ii. 15; compare 20): †

κῆν με φάγῃς ἐπὶ ρίζαν ὅμως ἔτι καρποφορήσω
ὅσσον ἐπισπείσαι σοί τράγε θυομένῳ :

Here the essence of this kind of poetry is said to be brevity. But nothing is said about a sting. And on the point of brevity, the Cyril, to whom this couplet is attributed, is far too stringent when judged by the best Greek standards. The modern notion of the epigram is derived from a study of Martial, whose best verses are satirical and therefore of necessity stinging.

* "Spring with her waving trees
Adorns the earth : to heaven
The pride of stars is given :
Athens illustrates Greece :
She on her brows doth set
Of men this coronet."

† "Though thou shouldst gnaw me to the root,
Destructive goat, enough of fruit
I bear, betwixt my horns to shed,
When to the altar thou art led."

and the following satire, so well known by the parody of Porson (ii. 325): *

πάντες μὲν Κίλικες κακοὶ ἄνδρες· ἐν δὲ Κίλιξιν
εἷς ἀγαθὸς Κινύρῃς, καὶ Κινύρῃς δὲ Κίλιξ.

Again the play of words in the last line of this next epigram (ii. 24) gives a sort of pungency to its conclusion : †

ἀτθὶ κόρα μελίθρεπτε, λάλος λάλον ἀρπάξασα
τέττιγα πτανοῖς δαῖτα φέρεις τέκεσιν,
τὸν λάλον ἃ λαλόεσσα, τὸν εὐπτερον ἃ πτερόεσσα,
τὸν ξένον ἃ ξείνα, τὸν θερινὸν θερινά;
κοῦχ' ἰάχος ῥίψεις; οὐ γὰρ θέμις οὐδὲ δίκαιον
ὄλλυσθ' ὕμνοπόλους ὕμνοπόλοις στόμασιν.

The Greek epigram has this, in fact, in common with all good poems, that the conclusion should be the strongest and most emphatic portion. But in liberty of subject and of treatment it corresponds to the Italian Sonnet. Unquestionably of this kind is the famous poem of Ptolemy upon the

* “The Germans at Greek
Are sadly to seek,
Not five in five-score,
But ninety-five more;
All—save only Hermann;
And Hermann's a German.”

PORSON.

† “Attic maid! with honey fed,
Bear'st thou to thy callow brood
Yonder locust from the mead,
Destined their delicious food?

“Ye have kindred voices clear
Ye alike unfold the wing,
Migrate hither, sojourn here,
Both attendant on the spring.

“Ah! for pity drop the prize;
Let it not with truth be said,
That a songster gasps and dies,
That a songster may be fed.”

W. COWPER.

stars (ii. 118), which recalls to mind the saying of Kant, that the two things which moved his awe were the stars of heaven above him and the moral law within the soul of man : *

οἷδ' ὅτι θνατὸς ἐγὼ καὶ ἐφάμερος· ἀλλ' ὅταν ἄστρον
 μαστεύω πυκινὰς ἀμφιδρόμους ἑλικας,
 οὐκέτ' ἐπιψαύω γαίης ποσίν, ἀλλὰ παρ' αὐτῷ
 Ζηνὶ θεοτρεφέος πίμπλαμαι ἀμβροσίης.

The poem on human life, which has been attributed severally to Poseidippus and to Plato Comicus, and which Bacon thought worthy of imitation, may take rank with the most elevated sonnets of modern literature (ii. 71) : †

ποίην τις βίοτοιο τάμη τρίβον; εἰν ἀγορῇ μὲν
 νείκεα καὶ χαλεπαὶ πρήξεις· ἐν δὲ δόμοις
 φρόντιδες· ἐν δ' ἀγροῖς καμάτων ἄλεις· ἐν δὲ θαλάσσῃ
 τάρβος· ἐπὶ ξείνης δ', ἥν μὲν ἔχῃς τι, δέος·

* “Though but the being of a day,
 When I yon planet's course survey,
 This earth I then despise :
 Near Jove's eternal throne I stand,
 And quaff from an immortal hand
 The nectar of the skies.”

PHILIP SMYTH.

† Bacon's version, “The world's a bubble, and the life of man—” is both well known and too long to quote. The following is from the pen of Sir John Beaumont :

“What course of life should wretched mortals take?
 In courts hard questions large contention make :
 Care dwells in houses, labour in the field.
 Tumultuous seas affrighting dangers yield.
 In foreign lands thou never canst be blessed ;
 If rich, thou art in fear ; if poor, distressed.
 In wedlock frequent discontentments swell ;
 Unmarried persons as in deserts dwell.
 How many troubles are with children born ;
 Yet he that wants them counts himself forlorn.
 Young men are wanton, and of wisdom void ;
 Grey hairs are cold, unfit to be employed.
 Who would not one of these two offers choose,
 Not to be born, or breath with speed to lose ?”

ἦν δ' ἀπορῆς, ἀνιηρόν· ἔχεις γάμον; οὐκ ἀμέριμνος
 ἔσσειαι· οὐ γαμέεις; (ῥῆς ἔτ' ἐρημότερος·
 τέκνα πόνου, πῆρωσις ἅπαις βίος· αἱ νεότητες
 ἄφρονες, αἱ πολιαὶ δ' ἔμπαλιν ἀδρανέες·
 ἦν ἄρα τοῖν δισσοῖν ἐνδὸς αἵρεσις, ἢ τὸ γενέσθαι
 μηδέποτ' ἢ τὸ θανεῖν αὐτίκα τικτόμενον.

The reverse of this picture is displayed with much felicity and geniality, but with less of force, by Metrodorus (ii. 72) : *

παντοίην βιότοιο τάμοις τρίβον· ἐν ἀγορῇ μὲν
 κύδεα καὶ πινυταὶ πρήξιες· ἐν δὲ δόμοις
 ἄμπαυμ'· ἐν δ' ἀγροῖς φύσιος χάρις· ἐν δὲ θαλάσῃ
 κέρδος· ἐπὶ ξείνης, ἦν μὲν ἔχῃς τι, κλέος·
 ἦν δ' ἀπορῆς μόνος οἶδας· ἔχεις γάμον; οἶκος ἄριστος
 ἔσσεται· οὐ γαμέεις; (ῥῆς ἔτ' ἐλαφρότερος·
 τέκνα πόθος, ἄφροντις ἅπαις βίος· αἱ νεότητες
 ῥωμαλείαι, πολιαὶ δ' ἔμπαλιν εὐσεβέες·
 οὐκ ἄρα τῶν δισσοῶν ἐνδὸς αἵρεσις, ἢ τὸ γενέσθαι
 μηδέποτ' ἢ τὸ θανεῖν· πάντα γὰρ ἐσθλὰ βίφα.

Some of the epigrams of this section are written in the true style of Elegies. The following splendid Threnody by Antipater of Sidon upon the ruins of Corinth, which was imitated by Agathias in his lines on Troy, may be cited as perfect in this style of composition (ii. 29) : †

- * “In every way of life true pleasure flows :
 Immortal fame from public action grows :
 Within the doors is found appeasing rest ;
 In fields the gifts of nature are expressed.
 The sea brings gain, the rich abroad provide
 To blaze their names, the poor their wants to hide :
 All households best are governed by a wife ;
 His cares are light, who leads a single life :
 Sweet children are delights which marriage bless ;
 He that hath none disturbs his thoughts the less.
 Strong youth can triumph in victorious deeds ;
 Old age the soul with pious motions feeds,
 All states are good, and they are falsely led
 Who wish to be unborn or quickly dead.”

SIR JOHN BEAUMONT

- † “Where, Corinth, are thy glories now,
 Thy ancient wealth, thy castled brow,

ποῦ τὸ περίβλεπτον κάλλος σέο, Δωρὶ Κόρινθε ;
 ποῦ στέφανοι πύργων, ποῦ τὰ πάλοι κτέανα,
 ποῦ νηοὶ μακάρων, ποῦ δώματα, ποῦ δὲ δάμαρτες
 Σισύφιοι, λαῶν θ' αἱ ποτὲ μυριάδες ;
 οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδ' ἔχνος, πολυκάμμορε, σείο λέλειπται,
 πάντα δὲ συμμάρψας ἐξέφαγεν πόλεμος .
 μοῦναι ἀπόρθητοι Νηρηίδες, Ὀκεανοῖο
 κοῦραι, σὼν ἀχέων μίμνομεν ἀλκυόνες .

It is a grand picture of the queen of pleasure in her widowhood and desolation mourned over by the deathless daughters of the plunging sea. Occasionally the theme of the epigram is historical. The finest, perhaps, of this sort is a poem by Philippus on Leonidas (ii. 59) :*

πούλιν Λεωνίδεω κατιδὼν δέμας αὐτοδῶϊκτον
 Ξέρξης ἐχλαίνου φάρεϊ πορφυρέῳ .
 κῆκ νεκύν δ' ἤχησεν ὁ τᾶς Σπάρτας πολὺς ἥρως .
 οὐδέχομαι προδόταις μισθὸν ὀφειλόμενον .
 ἀσπίς ἐμοὶ τύμβου κόσμος μέγας· αἶρε τὰ Περσῶν
 χῆξω κεῖς αἰτῶν ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος .

Few, however, of the epigrams rise to the altitude of those I have been lately quoting. Their subjects are for the most part simple incidents, or such as would admit of treatment

Thy solemn fanes, thy halls of state,
 Thy high-born dames, thy crowded gate?
 There's not a ruin left to tell
 Where Corinth stood, how Corinth fell.
 The Nereids of thy double sea
 Alone remain to wait for thee."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

- * "Seeing the martyred corpse of Sparta's king
 Cast 'mid the dead,
 Xerxes around the mighty limbs did fling
 His mantle red.
 Then from the shades the glorious hero cried :
 "Not mine a traitor's guerdon. 'Tis my pride
 This shield upon my grave to wear.
 Forbear
 Your Persian gifts ; a Spartan I will go
 To Death below."

within the space of an engraved gem. The story of the girls who played at dice upon the house-roof is told very prettily in the following lines (ii. 31) : *

αἱ τρισαί ποτε παῖδες ἐν ἀλλήλαισιν ἔπαιζον
κλήρῳ, τίς προτέρη βήσεται εἰς αἶδην·
καὶ τρὶς μὲν χειρῶν ἔβαλον κύβον, ἦλθε δὲ πασῶν
ἐς μίαν· ἥ δ' ἐγέλα κληῖρον ὀφειλόμενον·
ἐκ τέγεος γὰρ ἄελπτον ἔπειτ' ὦλισθε πέσσημα
δύσμορος, ἐς δ' αἶδην ἤλυθεν, ὥς ἔλαχεν·
ἄψευδης δὲ κληῖρος ὅτ' ἄκρόν· ἐς δὲ τὸ λῶον
οὗτ' εὐχαὶ θνητοῖς εὖστοχοι οὔτε χέρες.

Not the least beautiful are those which describe natural objects. The following six lines are devoted to an oak-tree (ii. 14) : †

κλῶνες ἀπηόριοι ταναῆς δρυὸς, εὖσκιον ὕψος
ἀνδράσιν ἄκρητον καῦμα φυλασσομένοις,
εὐπέταλοι, κεράμων στεγανώτεροι, οἰκία φαττῶν,
οἰκία τεττίγων, ἔνδιοι ἀκρεμόνες,
κῆμὲ τὸν ὑμετέραισιν ὑποκλινθέντα κόμαισιν
ρύσασθ', ἀκτίνων ἥελίου φυγάδα.

Here again is a rustic retreat for lovers, beneath the spreading branches of a plane (ii. 43) : ‡

- * "One day three girls were casting lots in play,
Which first to Acheron should take her way ;
Thrice with their sportive hands they threw, and thrice
To the same hand returned the fateful dice ;
The maiden laughed when thus her doom was told :
Alas ! that moment from the roof she rolled !
So sure is Fate whene'er it bringeth bale,
While prayers and vows for bliss must ever fail."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

- † "Aerial branches of tall oak, retreat
Of loftiest shade for those who shun the heat,
With foliage full, more close than tiling, where
Dove and cicada dwell aloft in air,
Me, too, that thus my head beneath you lay,
Protect, a fugitive from noon's fierce ray."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

- ‡ "Wide-spreading plane-tree, whose thick branches meet
To form for lovers an obscure retreat,

voice of song !” But the prettiest of all is this long story
(ii. 119) : *

Εὐνομον, ὦ πολλον, σὺ μὲν οἶσθά με, πῶς ποτ' ἐνίκων
 Σπάρτιν ὁ Λοκρὸς ἐγώ · πευθομένοις δ' ἐνέπω.
 αἰδολον ἐν κιθάρᾳ νόμον ἔκρεκον, ἐν δὲ μεσεύσα
 ᾤδᾳ μοι χορδὰν πλᾶκτρον ἀπεκρέμασεν ·
 καὶ μοι φθόγγον ἐτοῖμον ὀπανίκα καιρὸς ἀπῆτει,
 εἰς ἀκοὰς ῥυθμῶν τῶτρεκὲς οὐκ ἔνεμεν ·
 καὶ τις ἀπ' αὐτομάτῳ κιθάρας ἐπὶ πῆχυν ἐπιπτὰς
 τέττιξ ἐπλήρου τοῦλλιπὲς ἀρμονίας ·
 νεῦρα γὰρ ἔξ ἐτίνασσον · ὅθ' ἐβδομάτας δὲ μελοίμαν
 χορδὰς, τὰν τούτῳ γῆρυν ἐκιχράμεθα ·
 πρὸς γὰρ ἐμὰν μελέταν ὁ μεσαμβρινὸς οὔρεσιν ᾤδδς
 τῆνο τὸ ποιμενικὸν φθέγμα μεθηρμόσατο,
 καὶ μὲν ὅτε φθέγγοιτο, σὺν ἀψύχοις τόκα νευραῖς
 τῷ μεταβαλλομένῳ συμμετέπιπτε θρόφῳ ·
 τοῦνεκα συμφώνῳ μὲν ἔχω χάριν · ὅς δὲ τυπωθεὶς
 χάλκεος ἀμετέρας ἔζεθ' ὑπὲρ κιθάρας.

So friendly were the relations of the Greeks with the grasshoppers. We do not wonder when we read that the Athenians wore golden grasshoppers in their hair.

Baths, groves, gardens, houses, temples, city-gates, and works of art furnish the later epigrammatists with congenial subjects. The Greeks of the Empire exercised much ingenuity in describing—whether in prose, likè Philostratus, or in verse,

- * “ Phœbus, thou know'st me—Eunomus, who beat Spartis : the tale for others I repeat :
 Deftly upon my lyre I played and sang,
 When 'mid the song a broken harp-string rang,
 And seeking for its sound, I could not hear
 The note responsive to my descant clear.
 Then on my lyre, unasked, unsought, there flew
 A grasshopper, who filled the cadence due ;
 For while six chords beneath my fingers cried,
 He with his tuneful voice the seventh supplied :
 The mid-day songster of the mountains set
 His pastoral ditty to my canzonet ;
 And when he sang, his modulated throat
 Accorded with the lifeless strings I smote.
 Therefore I thank my fellow-minstrel :—he
 Sits on my lyre in brass, as you may see.”

like Agathias—the famous monuments of the maturity of Hellas. In this style the epigrams on statues are at once the most noticeable and the most abundant. The cow of Myron has at least two score of little sonnets to herself. The horses of Lysippus, the Zeus of Pheidias, the Rhamnusian statue of Nemesis, the Praxitelean Venus, various images of Erôs, the Niobids, Marsyas, Ariadne, Herakles, Alexander, poets, physicians, orators, historians, and all the charioteers and athletes preserved in the museums of Byzantium or the groves of Altis, are described with a minuteness and a point that enable us to identify many of them with the surviving monuments of Greek sculpture. Pictures also come in for their due share of notice. A Polyxena of Polyclethus, a Philoctetes of Parrhasius, and a Medea, which may have been the original of the famous Pompeian fresco, are specially remarkable. Then again cups engraved with figures in relief of Tantalus or Love, seals inscribed with Phœbus or Medusa, gems and intaglios of all kinds furnish matter for other epigrams. The following couplet on the amethyst turns upon an untranslatable play of words (ii. 149) :

ἡ λίθος ἐστ' ἀμέθυστος, ἐγὼ δ' ὁ πότης Διόνυσος ·
πεισάτω ἢ νήφειν μ', ἢ μαθέτω μεθύειν.

Amid this multitude of poems it is difficult to make a fair or representative selection. There are, however, four which I cannot well omit. The first is written by Poseidippus on a lost statue of Lysippus (ii. 584) : *

τίς πόθεν ὁ πλάστης ; Σικυώνιος · οὐνομα δὴ τίς ;
Λύσιππος. σὺ δὲ τίς ; Καίρως ὁ πανδαμάτωρ ·
τίπτε δ' ἐπ' ἄκρα βέβηκας ; αἰεὶ τροχάω. τί δὲ ταρσοὺς
ποσσὶν ἔχεις διφυεῖς ; ἵπταυ' ὑπηνέμιος ·

* “The sculptor’s country? Sicyon. His name?
Lysippus. You? Time that all things can tame.
Why thus a-tiptoe? I have halted never.
Why ankle-winged? I fly like wind for eve

χειρὶ δὲ δεξιτερῇ τὶ φέρεις ξυρόν; ἀνδράσι δειγμα-
 ῶς ἀκμῆς πάσης ὀξύτερος τελέθω.
 ἥ δὲ κόμη τὶ κατ' ὕψιν; ὑπαντιάσαντι λαβέσθαι.
 νῆ Δία τὰξόπιθεν δ' εἰς τὶ φαλακρὰ πέλει;
 τὸν γὰρ ἄπαξ πτηνοῖσι παραθρέξαντά με ποσσὶν
 οὔτις ἔθ' ἱμέλων δράζεται ἐξόπιθεν.
 τοῦνεχ' ὁ τεχνίτης σε διέπλασεν; εἴνεκεν ὕμων,
 ξεῖνε· καὶ ἐν προθύροις θῆκε διδασκαλίην.

The second describes the statue of Nemesis erected near Marathon by Pheidias—that memorable work by which the greatest of sculptors recorded the most important crisis in the world's history (ii. 573):*

χιονέην με λίθον παλιναυξέος ἐκ περιωπῆς
 λαοτύπος τμήξας πετροτόμοις ἀκίσι
 Μῆδος ἐποντοπόρευσεν, ὅπως ἀνδρείκελα τεύξη,
 τῆς κατ' Ἀθηναίων σύμβολα καμμονίης·
 ὥς δὲ δαΐζομένοις Μαραθῶν ἀντέκτυπε Πέρσαις
 καὶ νέες ὕδροπόρουν χεύμασιν αἱμαλέοις,
 ἔξεσαν Ἀδρήστειαν ἀριστῶδινες Ἀθῆναι,
 δαίμον' ὑπερφιάλοις ἀντίπαλον μερόπων·
 ἀντιταλαντεύω τὰς ἔλπιδας· εἰμὶ δὲ καὶ νῦν
 Νίκη Ἐρεχθείδαις, Ἀσσυρίοις Νέμεσις.

But in your hand that razor? 'Tis a pledge
 That I am keener than the keenest edge.
 Why falls your hair in front? For him to bind
 Who meets me. True: but then you're bald behind?
 Yes, because when with winged feet I have passed
 'Tis vain upon my back your hands to cast.
 Why did the sculptor carve you? For your sake
 Here in the porch I stand; my lesson take."

- * "My snowy marble from the mountain rude
 A Median sculptor with sharp chisel hewed,
 And brought me o'er the sea, that he might place
 A trophied statue of the Greeks' disgrace.
 But when the routed Persians heard the roar
 Of Marathon, and ships swam deep in gore,
 Then Athens, nurse of heroes, sculptured me
 The queen that treads on arrogance to be:
 I hold the scales of hope: my name is this—
 Niké for Greece, for Asia Nemesis."

The third celebrates the Aphrodite of Praxiteles in Cnidos, whose garden has been so elegantly described by Lucian (ii. 560) : *

ἡ Παφίη Κυθήρεια δι' οἴδατος ἐς Κνίδον ἦλθε
 βουλομένη κατιδεῖν εἰκόνα τὴν ἰδίην ·
 πάντα δ' ἀθρήσασα περισκέπτω ἐνὶ χώρῳ,
 φθέγγετο · ποῦ γυμνὴν εἶδέ με Πραξιτέλης ;

The fourth is composed with much artifice of style upon a statue of Love bound by his arms to a pillar (ii. 567) : †

κλαῖε δυσεκφύκτως σφιγχθεὶς χέρας, ἄκριτε δαῖμον,
 κλαῖε μάλα, στάζων ψυχотаκῇ δάκρυα,
 σωφροσύνας ὕβριστὰ, φρενοκλόπε, ληστὰ λογισμοῦ,
 πτανδν πῦρ, ψυχᾶς τραῦμ' ἀόρατον, Ἔρως ·
 θνατοῖς μὲν λύσις ἐστὶ γόων ὁ σὸς, ἄκριτε, δεσμός ·
 ᾧ σφιγχθεὶς κωφοῖς πέμπε λιτὰς ἀνέμοις ·
 ὃν δὲ βροτοῖς ἀφύλακτος ἐνέφλεγες ἐν φρεσὶ πυρσὸν
 ἄθρει νῦν ὑπὸ σῶν σβεγννύμενον δακρύων.

* “Bright Cytherea thought one day
 To Cnidos she'd repair,
 Gliding across the watery way
 To view her image there.
 But when arrived, she cast around
 Her eyes divinely bright,
 And saw upon that holy ground
 The gazing world's delight,
 Amazed, she cried— while blushes told
 The thoughts that swelled her breast—
 Where did Praxiteles behold
 My form? or has he guessed?”

J. H. MERIVALE.

† “Weep, reckless god ; for now your hands are tied :
 Weep, wear your soul out with the flood of tears,
 Heart-robber, thief of reason, foe to pride,
 Winged fire, thou wound unseen the soul that sears !
 Freedom from grief to us these bonds of thine,
 Wherein thou wailest to the deaf winds, bring :
 Behold ! the torch wherewith thou mad'st us pine,
 Beneath thy frequent tears is languishing !”

In bringing this review of the Anthology to a close I feel that I have been guilty of two errors. I have wearied the reader with quotations. Yet I have omitted countless epigrams of the purest beauty. The very riches of this flower-garden of little poems are an obstacle to its due appreciation. Each epigram in itself is perfect, and ought to be carefully and lovingly studied. But it is difficult for the critic to deal in a single essay with upwards of four thousand of these precious gems. There are many points of view which with adequate space and opportunity might have been taken for the better illustration of the epigrams. Their connection with the later literature of Greece, especially with the rhetoricians, Philostratus, Alciphron, and Libanius, many of whose best compositions are epigrams in prose—as Jonson knew when he turned them into lyrics; their still more intimate æsthetic harmony with the engraved stones and minor bas-reliefs, which bear exactly the same relation to Greek sculpture as the epigrams to the more august forms of Greek poetry; the lives of their authors; the historical events to which they not unfrequently allude—all these are topics for elaborate dissertation.

Perhaps, however, the true secret of their charm is this; that in their couplets, after listening to the choric raptures of triumphant public art, we turn aside to hear the private utterances, the harmoniously modulated whispers of a multitude of Greek poets telling us their inmost thoughts and feelings. The unique melodies of Meleager, the chaste and exquisite delicacy of Callimachus, the clear dry style of Straton, Plato's unearthly subtlety of phrase, Antipater's perfect polish, the good sense of Palladas, the fretful sweetness of Agathias, the purity of Simonides, the gravity of Poseidippus, the pointed grace of Philip, the few but mellow tones of Sappho and Erinna, the tenderness of Simmias, the biting wit of Lucillius, the sunny radiance of Theocritus—all these good things are ours in the Anthology. But beyond these

perfumes of the poets known to fame, is yet another. Over very many of the sweetest and the strongest of the epigrams is written the pathetic word ἀδέσποτον—without a master. Hail to you, dead poets, unnamed, but dear to the Muses! Surely with Pindar and with Anacreon and with Sappho and with Sophocles the bed of flowers is spread for you in those “black-petalled hollows of Pieria” where Ion bade farewell to Euripides.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GENIUS OF GREEK ART.

Separation between the Greeks and us.—Criticism.—Nature.—The Olive.
 —Greek Sculpture.—Greek Sense of Beauty.—Greek Morality.—
 Greece, Rome, Renaissance, the Modern Spirit.

THE Greeks had no past : “ no hungry generations trod them down ” : whereas the multitudinous associations of immense antiquity envelop all our thoughts and feelings.* “ O Solon, Solon,” said the priest of Egypt, “ you Greeks are always children ! ” The world has now grown old ; we are grey from the cradle onwards, swathed with the husks of outworn creeds, and rocked upon the lap of immemorial mysteries. The travail of the whole earth, the unsatisfied desires of many races, the anguish of the death and birth of successive civilizations, have passed into our souls. Life itself has become a thousandfold more complicated and more difficult for us than it was in the springtime of the world. With the increase of the size of nations, poverty and disease and the struggle for bare existence have been aggravated. How can we then bridge over the gulf which separates us from the Greeks ? How shall we, whose souls are aged and wrinkled with the

* This chapter was written with the purpose of simply illustrating the *æsthetic* spirit of the Greeks. I had no intention of writing a complete essay on the spirit of the Greeks as illustrated by their history and philosophy. To the last chapter of my Second Series of *Studies of Greek Poets*, I may refer the reader for a supplemental treatment of several important points suggested in these pages.

long years of humanity, shake hands across the centuries with those young-eyed, young-limbed immortal children? Can we make criticism our Medea—bid the magnificent witch pluck leaves and flowers of Greek poetry and art and life, distilling them for us to bathe therein and regenerate our youth like Æson?

Like a young man newly come from the wrestling-ground, anointed, chapleted, and very calm, the Genius of the Greeks appears before us. Upon his soul there is no burden of the world's pain; the creation that groaneth and travaileth together, has touched him with no sense of anguish; nor has he yet felt sin. The pride and the strength of adolescence are his—audacity and endurance, swift passions and exquisite sensibilities, the alternations of sublime repose and boyish noise, grace, pliancy, and stubbornness and power, love of all fair things and splendours of the world, the frank enjoyment of the open air, free merriment, and melancholy well beloved. Of these adolescent qualities, of this clear and stainless personality, this conscience whole and pure and reconciled to Nature, what survives among us now? The imagination must be strained to the uttermost before we can begin to sympathize with such a being. The blear-eyed mechanic, stifled in a hovel of our sombre northern towns, canopied through all the year with smoke, deafened with wheels that never cease to creak, stiffened by toil in one cramped posture, oblivious of the sunlight and green fields, could scarcely be taught even to envy the pure clear life of Art made perfect in Humanity, which was the pride of Hellas. His soul is gladdened, if at all, by a glimpse of celestial happiness far off: the hope that went abroad across the earth so many centuries ago, has raised his eyes to heaven. How can he comprehend a mode of existence in which the world itself was adequate to all the wants of the soul, and when to yearn for more than life affords was reckoned a disease?

We may tell of blue *Ægean* waves, islanded with cliffs that seem less real than clouds, whereon the temples stand, burning like gold in sunset or turning snowy fronts against the dawn. We may paint high porches of the gods, resonant with music and gladdened with choric dances; or describe perpetual sunshine and perpetual ease—no work from year to year that might degrade the body or impair the mind, no dread of hell, no yearning after heaven, but summer-time of youth, and autumn of old age, and loveless death bewept and bravely borne.* The life of the schools, the theatre, the wrestling-ground, the law-courts; generous contests on the Pythian or Olympian plains; victorious crowns of athletes or of patriots; Simonidean epitaphs and funeral orations of Pericles for fallen heroes; the prize of martial prowess or poetic skill; the honour paid to the pre-eminence of beauty;—all these things admit of scholar-like enumeration. Or we may recall by fancy the olive-groves of the Academy; discern *Hymettus* pale against the burnished sky, and Athens guarded by her glistening goddess of the mighty brow—*Pallas*, who spreads her shield, and shakes her spear above the labyrinth of peristyles and pediments in which her children dwell. Imagination can lead us to the plane-trees on *Cephisus*' shore, the labours of the husbandmen who garner dues of corn and oil, the galleys in *Peiræan* harbourage. Or with the *Lysis* and the *Charmides* beneath our eyes, we may revisit the haunts of the wrestlers and the runners, true-born Athenians,

* But, while we tell of these good things, we must not conceal the truth that they were planted, like exquisite exotic flowers, upon the black rank soil of slavery. That is the dark background of Greek life. Greek slaves may not have been worse off than other slaves—may indeed most probably have been better treated than the serfs of feudal Germany and Spanish Mexico. Yet who can forget the stories of Spartan Helotry, or the torments of Syracusan stone-quarries, or the pale figure of *Phædon* rescued, true-born Elean as he was, by *Socrates* from an Athenian brothel?

fresh from the bath and crowned with violets, chaste, vigorous, inured to rhythmic movements of the passions and the soul.

Yet after all, when the process of an elaborate culture has thus been toilsomely accomplished, when we have trained our soul to sympathize with that which is so novel and so strange and yet so natural, few of us can fairly say that we have touched the Greeks at more than one or two points. *Novies Styx interfusa coerct*: between us and them crawls the nine times twisted stream of Death. The history of the human race is one; and without the Greeks we should be nothing. But just as an old man of ninety is not the same being as the boy of nineteen,—nay, cannot even recall to memory how and what he felt when the pulse of manhood was yet gathering strength within his veins,—even so now civilized humanity looks back upon the youth of Hellas and wonders what she was in that blest time. A few fragments yet remain from which we strive to reconstruct the past. Criticism is the product of the weakness as well as of the strength of our age. In the midst of our activity we have so little that is artistically salient or characteristic in our life, that we are not led astray by our own individuality or tempted to interpret the past wrongly by making it square with the present. Impartial clearness of judgment in scientific research, laborious antiquarian zeal, methodic scrupulousness in preserving the minutest details of local colouring, and an earnest craving to escape from the dreary present of common-place respectability into the spirit-stirring freedom of the past—these are qualities of the highest value which our century has brought to bear upon history. They make up in some measure for our want of the creative faculties which more productive but less scientific ages have possessed, and enable those who have but little original imagination to enjoy imaginative pleasures at second hand, by living as far as may be in the clear light of antique beauty.

The sea, the hills, the plains, the sunlight of the South, together with some ruins which have peopled Europe with phantoms of dead art, and the reliques of Greek literature, are our guides in the endeavour to restore the past of Hellas. Among rocks golden with broom-flowers, murmurous with bees, burning with anemones in spring and oleanders in summer, and odorous through all the year with thyme, we first assimilate the spirit of the Greeks. In the silence of mountain valleys, thinly grown with arbutus and pine and oak, open at all seasons to pure air, and breaking downwards to the sea, we understand the apparition of Pan to Pheidippides, and divine the secret of an architecture which aimed at definition before all things. The Bay of Naples, the coast of Sicily, are instinct with the sense of those first settlers, who coasting round the silent promontories, ran their keels upon the shelving shore, and drew them up along the strand, and named the spot Neapolis or Gela. The boys of Rome were yet in the wolf's cavern. Vesuvius was a peaceful hill on which the olive and the vine might slumber. The slopes of Pozzuoli were green with herbs, over which no lava had been poured. Wandering about Sorrento, the spirit of the *Odyssey* is ours. Those fishing-boats with lateen sail are such as bore the heroes from their ten years' toil at Troy. Those shadowy islands caught the gaze of Æneas straining for the promised land. Into such clefts and rents of rock strode Herakles and Jason when they sought the golden apples and the golden fleece. Look down. There gleam the green and yellow dragon-scales, coiled on the basement of the hills, and writhing to each curve and cleavage of the chasm. Is it a dream? Do we in fact behold the mystic snake, or in the twilight do those lustrous orange-trees deceive our eyes? Nay : there are no dragons in the ravine—only thick boughs, and burnished leaves, and snowy bloom, and globes of glittering gold. Above them on the cliff sprout myrtle-rods, sacred to Love, myrtle-branches, with which the Athenians wreathed.

their swords in honour of Harmodius. Lilies and jonquils and hyacinths stand, each straight upon his stem—a youth, as Greeks imagined, slain by his lover's hand, or dead for love of his own loveliness, or cropped in love's despite by death, that is the foe of love. Scarlèt and white anemones are there, some born of Adonis' blood, and some of Aphrodite's tears. All beauty fades : the flowers of earth, the bloom of youth, man's strength, and woman's grace, all wither and relapse into the loveless and inexorable grave. This the Greeks knew, mingling mirth with melancholy, and love with sadness, their sweetest songs with elegiac melodies.

Beneath the olive-trees, among the flowers and ferns, move stately maidens and bare-chested youths. Their eyes are starry-softened or flash fire, and their lips are parted to drink in the breath of life. Some are singing in the fields, an antique world-old monotone of song. Was not the lay of Linus, the burden of *μακρὰι τὰι ὀρέεσσι Μενάλκᾳ* (High are the oak-trees, O Menalcas), some such canzonet as this? These late descendants of Greek colonists are still beautiful—like moving statues in the sunlight and the shadow of the boughs. Yonder tall straight girl, whose pitcher, poised upon her head, might have been filled by Electra or Chrysothemis with lustral waters for a father's tomb, carries her neck as nobly as a Fate of Pheidias. Her body sways upon the hips, where rests her modelled arm ; the ankle and the foot are sights to sit and gaze at through a summer's day. And where, if not here, shall we meet with Hylas and Hyacinth, with Ganymede and Hymenæus, in the flesh? As we pass, the laughter and the singing die away. Bright dresses and pliant forms are lost. We stray onward through the sheen and shade of olive-branches.

The olive was Athene's gift to Hellas, and Athens carved its leaves and berries on her drachma with the head of Pallas and her owl. The light which never leaves its foliage, silvery beneath and sparkling from the upper surface of burnished

green, the delicacy of its stem, which in youth and middle and old age retains the distinction of finely accentuated form, the absence of sombre shadow on the ground beneath its branches, might well fit the olive to be the symbol of the purity of classic Art. Each leaf is cut into a lance-head of brilliancy, not jagged or fanciful or woolly like the foliage of northern trees. There is here no mystery of darkness, no labyrinth of tortuous shade, no conflict of contrasted forms. Excess of light sometimes fatigues the eye amid those airy branches, and we long for the repose of gloom to which we are accustomed in our climate. But gracefulness, fertility, power, radiance, pliability, are seen in every line. The spirit of the Greeks itself is not more luminous and strong and subtle. The colour of the olive-tree, again, is delicate. Its pearly greys and softened greens in no wise interfere with the lustre which is the true distinction of the tree. Clear and faint like Guido's colours in the Ariadne of St. Luke's at Rome, distinct as the thought in a Greek epigram, the olive-branches are relieved against the bright blue of the sea. The mountain slopes above are clothed by them with light as with a raiment: clinging to knoll and vale and winding creek, rippling in hoary undulations to the wind, they wrap the hills from feet to flank in lucid haze. Above the olives shine bare rocks in steady noon or blush with dawn and evening.* Nature is naked and beautiful beneath the sun—like Aphrodite, whose raiment falls waist-downward to her sandals on the sea, but whose pure breasts and forehead are unveiled.

Nature is thus the first, chief element by which we are enabled to conceive the spirit of the Greeks. The key to their mythology is here. Here is the secret of their sympathies, the well-spring of their deepest thoughts, the primitive potentiality of all

* See the introduction to my chapter on Athens in *Sketches in Italy and Greece* for the characteristic quality given to Attic landscape by grey limestone mountain ranges.

they have achieved in art. What is Apollo but the magic of the sun whose soul is light? What is Aphrodite but the love-charm of the sea? What is Pan but the mystery of Nature, the felt and hidden want pervading all? What again are those elder, dimly-discovered deities, the Titans and the brood of Time, but forces of the world as yet beyond the touch and ken of human sensibilities? But Nature alone cannot inform us what that spirit was. For though the Greeks grew up in scenes which we may visit, they gazed on them with Greek eyes, eyes different from ours, and dwelt upon them with Greek minds, minds how unlike our own! Unconsciously, in their long and unsophisticated infancy, the Greeks absorbed and assimilated to their own substance that loveliness which it is left for us only to admire. Between them and ourselves—even face to face with mountain, sky, and sea, unaltered by the lapse of years—flow the rivers of Death and Lethe, and the mists of thirty centuries of human life are woven like a veil. To pierce that veil, to learn even after the most partial fashion how they transmuted the splendours of the world into æsthetic forms, is a work which involves the further interrogation of their sculpture and their literature.

The motives of that portion of Greek sculpture which brings us close to the incidents of Greek life are very simple. A young man binding a fillet round his head; a boy drawing a thorn from his foot; a girl who has been wounded in the breast, raising her arm to show where the sword smote her; an athlete bending every sinew to discharge the quoit; a line of level-gazing youths on prancing horses, some faring forward with straight eyes, one turning with bridle-hand held lightly to encourage his companion, another with loose mantle in the act to mount, others thrown back to rein upon their haunches passionate steeds; a procession of draped maidens bearing urns:—such are the sculptured signs by which we read the placid physical fulfilment of Greek life. That the serenity of

satisfied existence is an end in itself and that death in the plenitude of vigour is desirable, the reliefs of Pheidias and the Æginetan marbles teach us. In these simple but consummate works of art the beauty of mere health, animal enjoyment, temperance, mental vigour, and heroic daring mingle and create one splendour of a human being sensitive to all influences and vital in every faculty. Excess can nowhere be discovered. Compare with these forms for a moment the Genii painted by Michael Angelo upon the roof of the Sistine Chapel. Over them has passed the spirit with its throes : *la maladie de la pensée* is there. Of no Phœbus and no Pallas are they the servants ; but ministers of prophets and sibyls, angels of God fulfilling His word, they incarnate the wrestlings and the judgments and the resurrections of the soul. Now take a banquet-scene from some Greek vase. Along the cushioned couch lie young men, naked, crowned with myrtles : in their laps are women, and at their sides broad jars of honeyed wine. A winged Erôs hovers over them, and their lips are opened to sing a song of ancient love. Yet this is no forecast of Borgia revels in Rome, or of the French Regent's Parc aux Cerfs. When Autolycus entered the symposium of Xenophon, all tongues were stricken dumb ; man gazed at man in wonder at his bloom of adolescence. When Charmides, heading the troop of wrestlers, joined Socrates in the palæstra, the soul of the philosopher was troubled ; he saw the boy's breast within the tunic, and blushed, and felt his heart aflame. Simætha, in the *Pharmaceutria* of Theocritus, beheld the curls of youths on horseback like laburnum-flowers, and their bosoms whiter than the moon.

We need not embark on antiquarian, or metaphysical, or historical discussions in order to understand the sense of Beauty which was inherent in the Greeks. Little hints scattered by the wayside are far more helpful. Take for example the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, and after reading the

speech of the Dikaïos Logos, stand beneath the Athlete of Lysippus,* in the Braccio Nuovo of the Vatican. "Fresh and fair in beauty-bloom you shall pass your days in the wrestling-ground, or run races beneath the sacred olive-trees, crowned with white reed, in company with a pure-hearted friend, smelling of bindweed and leisure hours and the white poplar that sheds her leaves, rejoicing in the prime of spring, when the plane-tree whispers to the lime." This life the Dikaïos Logos offers to the young Athenian, if he will forgo the law-courts and the lectures of the sophists and the house of the hetaira. This life rises above us imaged in the sculptor's marble. The athlete, tall and stately, tired with running, lifts one arm, and with his strigil scrapes away the oil with which he has anointed it. His fingers hold the die that tells his number in the race. Upon his features there rests no shade of care or thought, but the delicious languor of momentary fatigue, and the serenity of a nature in harmony with itself. A younger brother of the same lineage is the Adorante of the Berlin Museum. His eyes and arms are raised to heaven. Perfect in humanity, beneath the lightsome vault of heaven he stands and prays—a prayer of joy and calm thanksgiving, a Greek prayer—no Roman adoration with veiled eyes and muttering lips, no Jewish prostration with the putting off of sandals on the holy ground, no Christian genuflexion like the bending of wind-smitten reeds beneath the spirit-breath of sacraments. Iamos in the mid-waves of Alpheus might have prayed thus when he heard the voice of Phœbus calling to him and promising the twofold gift of prophecy. All the statues of the athletes bear the seal and blossom of *σωφροσύνη*—that

* This statue, usually called the Apoxyomenos, may possibly be a copy in marble of the Athlete of Lysippus which Tiberius wished to remove from the Baths of Agrippa. The Romans were so angry at the thought of being deprived of their favourite, that Tiberius had to leave it where it stood.

truly Greek virtue, the correlative in morals to the passion for Beauty. "When I with justice on my lips flourished," says the Dikaïos Logos, "and modesty was held in honour, then a boy's voice was not heard; but they went orderly through the streets in bands together from their quarters to the harp-player's school, uncloaked and barefoot, even though it snowed like meal." Of this sort are the two wrestling boys at Florence, whose heads and faces form in outline the ellipse which is the basis of all beauty, and whose strained muscles exhibit the chord of masculine vigour vibrating with tense vitality. If we in England seek some living echo of this melody of curving lines, we must visit the water-meadows where boys bathe in early morning, or the playgrounds of our public schools in summer, or the banks of the Isis when the eights are on the water, or the riding-schools of young soldiers. We cannot reconstitute the elements of Greek life: but here and there we may gain hints for adding breath and pulse and movement to Greek sculpture.

The charm which the simplest things acquired under the hand of a Greek artificer may be seen in the adornment of a circular hand-mirror.* Ivy-branches, dividing both ways from the handle, surround its rim with a delicate tracery of sharp-cut leaf and corymb. The central space is occupied by four figures—on the right the boy Dionysus, who welcomes his mother in heaven, on the left Phœbus and a young Paniscus playing on the double pipes. Grace can go no further than in the attitude and the expression of this group. Dionysus is thrown backward; both his arms are raised to encircle the neck of Semele, who bends to kiss his upturned lips. A necklace with pendent balls defines the throat of the stripling where it meets his breast, suggesting by some touch beyond analysis the life that pulses in his veins. He has armlets too below the elbow, and his rich hair ripples in ringlets between cheek

* Engraved in Müller's *Denkmäler der alten Kunst*, Plate XLI.

and shoulder. The little Paniscus is seated, attending only to his music, with such childish earnestness as shows that his whole soul goes forth in piping. Phœbus, half-draped and lustrous, stands erect beside a slender shaft of laurel planted on the ground. Such are the delights of Paradise to which, as Greeks imagined, a deity might welcome his earthly mother, leading her by the hand from Hades. It would be easy enough to fill a volume with such descriptions—to unlock the cabinets of gems and coins, or to linger over vases painted with the single figure of a winged boy in tender red upon their blackness, and showing the word ΚΑΛΟΣ negligently written at the side.

But it is more to the purpose to note in passing that delicate perception of associated qualities which led the Greeks to maintain a sympathy between cognate deities, while distinguishing to the utmost their specific attributes. Aphrodite, Erôs, Dionysus, Hermes, Hermaphrodite, the Graces, the Nymphs, the Genius of Death—these, for example, though carefully individualized, are still of one kindred. They blend and mingle in a concord of separate yet interpenetrating beauties. Between the radiant Aphrodite of Melos, who in her triumphant attitude seems to be an elder sister of the brazen-winged Victory of Brescia, and the voluptuous Aphrodite Callipygos,* a whole rhythm of finely modulated forms may be drawn out, each one of which corresponds to some mood or moment of the enamoured soul. Her immortal son in the Erôs of Pheidias† is imaged as the “first of gods,” θεῶν πρότιστος, upstarting in his slenderness of youth from Chaos—the keen fine light of dawn dividing night from day. In the Praxitelean Cupid,

“ that most perfect of antiques,
They call the Genius of the Vatican,
Which seems too beauteous to endure itself
In this rough world— ”

* Neapolitan Museum.

† British Museum.

he becomes the deity described by Plato in the *Phædrus*, an incarnation of the tenderest passion, tinged, in spite of his own radiance, with sadness. What thought has made him sorrowful and bowed his head? Perhaps Theognis can tell us : *—

ἄφρονες ἄνθρωποι καὶ νήπιοι, ὅτε θανόντας
κλαίουσ' οὐδ' ἤβης ἄνθος ἀπολλύμενον.

The winged boy, again, bending his bow against the hearts of lovers, with his lion's skin beside him,† is the Erôs of Agathon—he who delights to walk delicately upon the tender places of the soul. Next we find him asleep upon his folded pinions, the mischievous child who rewarded Anacreon's hospitality by wounding him, and who gave to the thirsty heart of Meleager scalding tears to drink. How in the last place are we to distinguish Love from Harpocrates, the silent, with one finger on his lip?

Turn next to Hermes. When the herald of Olympus met Priam midway between Troy-town and Achilles' tent, he was, says Homer,

νεηνίη ἀνδρὶ ἐοικώς,
πρῶτον ὑπηνήτην, τοῦπερ χαριεστάτη ἤβη,—

“like a young man, with budding beard, whose bloom is in the prime of grace.” This adolescent loveliness belongs throughout to Hermes. As the genius of the gymnasium,‡ he is a divinized athlete, scarcely to be distinguished from the quoit-throwers and the runners he protects. The Hermes, who woos a nymph with his arm around her waist,§ has Persuasion for his parent. Again the seated Hermes with wings upon his

* “Ah, vain and thoughtless men, who wail the dead,
But not one tear for youth's frail blossom shed !”

† Of this statue there are many slightly different copies. The best is in the Vatican.

‡ See the so-called Antinous of the Belvedere.

§ Engraved in Clarac, *Musée de Sculpture*, Planches, vol. iv. pl. 666 c.

ankles is the swiftness of auroral light incarnate. Nor lastly, when, with chlamys thrown upon his shoulder and petasos slung from his neck, he leads souls to Hades, caduceus in hand, has he lost this quality of youth and lustre. He upon Aphrodite begat Hermaphrodite. Their union—the union of athletic goodliness and consummate womanhood—produced a blending of two beauties forgotten by an oversight of nature. There exists a Term or Hermes* which combines Aphrodite, Priapus, and Hermaphrodite in one—three heads upon a common pedestal—forming a trinity of sensuous joy.

How various again is Bacchus, passing from the stately mildness of the bearded Indian god to the luxuriant wantonness of Phales, the “night-wandering reveller”! At one time you can scarcely distinguish him from young Apollo or young Herakles; at another his brows and tresses have the chastity of Love; again he assumes the voluptuous form which befits the sire by Aphrodite of Priapus. The fascination of the grape-juice lends itself to all qualities that charm the soul of man. Yet another of these cognate deities may be mentioned. That is the Genius of Eternal Slumber,† reclining with arms folded above his head, upright against a tree. To judge by his attitude, he might be Bacchus, wine-drowsy, as in a statue of the gallery at Florence. Looking at his long tresses, we call him Love: and what deities are of closer kin than Love and Death? His stately form, not unlike that of Phœbus, makes us exclaim in Æschylean language *ὦ θάνατε παῖάν* (O Death, the Healer!) But he is stronger and more perdurable, less swift to move, less light of limb, than any of these. It was a deep and touching intuition of the Greeks which prompted them to ascribe these kinships to Death. Who knows even now whether the winged and sworded Genius of the Ephesus column be Love or Death? To trace such analogies further

* Engraved in Clarac, *Musée de Sculpture*, Planches, vol. iv. pl. 613.

† Louvre.

would be fanciful : it is enough to pluck at random a few blossoms, and to scatter them for lovers. To Winckelmann and the antiquaries may be left the accurate distinctions of the Greek deities. Without seeking to confound these, but rather studying them most carefully, we may yet discern by passing hints that purity of tact which enabled the Greeks to interpret in their statuary every *nuance* of feeling and of fancy, and to mark by subtlest suggestions their points of agreement as well as of divergence.

When Hippolytus in Euripides first appears upon the scene, he greets Artemis with these words :—

“ Lady, for thee, this garland have I woven
Of wilding flowers, plucked from an unshorn meadow,
Where neither shepherd dares to feed his flock,
Nor ever scythe hath swept, but through the grasses
Unshorn in spring the bee pursues her labours,
And maiden modesty with running rills
Waters the garden.”

Before the Meleager of the Vatican, so calm and strong and redolent of forest odours, this orison rings in our memory, and the Diana of the Louvre seems ready to spring forth, and loose her hind, and call on the hero to hunt with her. The life of woods and mountains was divined and interpreted with exquisite sensibility by the Attic sculptors. Children of the earth, and conscious of their own recent birth from the bosom of the divine in nature, they loved all fair and fresh things of the open world fraternally. Therefore they could carve the mystery of the Praxitelean Faun,* whose subtle smile is a lure for souls, and the voluptuous sleep of the Barberini Faun,† who seems to have but half escaped from elemental existence, and still to own some kindred with unconscious things. The joy of the shepherd who carries on his back a laughing child at Naples ; the linked arms of Bacchus and Ampelus ; the

* The Capitol.

† Glyptothek, Munich.

young Triton* who blows his horn over the crests of the waves, and calls upon his brethren the billows to rejoice with him, as he bears his nymph away ; the subtle charm of double life in Hermaphrodite, in whom two sexes are hidden, like a bitter and a sweet almond in one beautiful but barren husk ; the frank sensuality of Silenus and Priapus ; the dishevelled hair and quivering flanks of Mænads ; the laughter of Erôs wreathed around with coils of the enamoured dolphin's tail ; † the pride of the eagle soaring heavenward with Ganymede among his plumes : from tokens like these, together with the scenes of the Bacchæ and the Cyclops of Euripides, the Idylls of Theocritus, and the dedicatory epigrams of the Anthology, we learn of what sort was the sympathy of the Greeks for nature. Their beautiful humanity is so close to the mother ever youthful of all life, to the full-breasted earth, that they seem calling through their art to the woods and waves and rivers, crying to their brethren that still tarry : "Come forth, and be like us ; begin to feel and know your happiness ; put on the form of flesh in which the world's soul reaches consciousness" ! Humanity defined upon the borderland of nature is the life of all Greek sculpture. Even the gods are films of fleshly form emergent on the surface of the elements. The circle of the sun dilates, and Phœbus grows into distinctness with the glory round him ; out of the liquid ether gaze the divine eyes of Zeus ; Poseidon rises breast high from the mirrors of the sea. Man for the first time conscious of his freedom, yet clinging still to the breasts that gave him suck, like a flower rooted to the kindly earth, expresses all his thought and feeling in the language of his own shape. "The Greek Spirit," says Hegel, "is the plastic artist forming the stone into a work of art." And this work of art is invariably the image of a man or woman. The most sublime aspirations, the subtlest in-

* The Vatican.

† Naples.

tuitions, the darkest forebodings, the audacities of passion, the freedom of the senses, put on personality in Hellas and assume a robe of carnal beauty. In Egypt and the Orient humanity lay still upon "the knees of a mild mystery." The Egyptians had not discovered the magic word by means of which the world might be translated into the language of mankind : their art still remained within the sphere of symbolism which excludes true sympathy. The Jews had concentrated their thought upon moral phenomena : in their jealousy of the abstract purity of the soul they banned the arts as impious.

Theognis tells us that when the Muses and the Graces came down from Olympus to the marriage-feast of Cadmus and Harmonia, they sang a song with this immortal burden : *

ὅττι καλὸν, φίλον ἐστί· τὸ δ' οὐ καλὸν οὐ φίλον ἐστίν.

This strikes the keynote to the music of the Greek genius. Beauty is the true province of the Greeks, their indefeasible domain. But their conception of beauty was both more comprehensive and more concrete than any which a modern race, perturbed by the division of the flesh and spirit, conscious of Jewish no less than Greek tradition, can attain to. When Goethe expressed his theory of life in the following couplet :

"Im Ganzen Guten Schönen
Resolut zu leben : " †

he supplied us with a correct definition of the spirit which governed Hellas. Beauty to the Greeks was one aspect of the universal synthesis, commensurate with all that is fair in manners and comely in morals. It was the harmony of man with nature in a well-balanced and complete humanity, the

* See above, p. 98 note, for an English version of this line.

† "To live with steady purpose in the whole, the Good, the Beautiful." These two lines are generally misquoted—Schönen being exchanged for Wahren, Beauty for Truth.

bloom of health upon a conscious being, satisfied, as flowers and beasts and stars are satisfied, with the conditions of temporal existence. It was the joy-note of the whole world, heard and echoed by the sole being who could comprehend it—Man. That alone was beautiful which uttered a sound in unison with the whole ; and all was good which had this quality of concord. To be really beautiful was to be an integral part of the world's symphony, to be developed fully in all parts, without an undue preference for the soul before the body or for the passions before the reason—to maintain the rhythm and the measure and the balance of those faculties which characterize man, nature's masterpiece. The profounder reaches of this thought were explored by philosophers, who figured the soul as a Harmony, who conceived of God as the Idea of Beauty, or who, like Marcus Aurelius, defined virtue to be a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature. In the region of social life it led the Greeks to treat the State as an organic whole, which might be kept in preservation by the balance of its several forces. In the sphere of religion it produced a race of gods, each perfect in his individuality, distinct and self-contained, but blending, like the colours of the prism, in the white light of Zeus, who was the whole.* In actual life it facilitated the development of characters which, by the free expansion of personality and by a conscious culture, were themselves consummate works of art. Just as the unity of the Greek religion was not the unity of the One but of the Many blent and harmonized in the variety that we observe in Nature, so the ideal of Greek life imposed no commonplace conformity to one fixed standard on individuals, but each man was encouraged to complete and realize the type of himself to the

* The Greek Pantheon, regarded from one point of view, represents an exhaustive psychological analysis. Nothing in human nature is omitted : but each function and each quality of man is deified. To Zeus as the supreme reason all is subordinated.

utmost. Pericles devoted his energy to the perfecting of statesmanship and became the incarnation of the Athenian spirit; Pindar was a poet through and through; for the Olympian victor it was enough to be a splendid animal; Pheidias lived in concord with the universe by his exclusive devotion to his art. Thus formed and modelled to the utmost perfection each of his own kind, these characters, when contemplated together from a distance, like the deities of Olympus, present, in the harmony that springs from difference, an ideal of Humanity. The Greek no less than the Christian might need to cut off his right hand,—to debar himself like Pericles from the pleasures of society,—or to cast aside the sin that doth so easily beset us—like Socrates who trampled under foot his sensual instincts,—for the attainment of that self-evolution which gave him the right to be one note in the concord of the whole, one colour in the prism of humanity. The one thing needful to him was, not belief in the unseen, nor of necessity holiness, but a firm resolve to comprehend and cultivate his own capacity, and thus to add his quota to the sum of beauty in the world.

The Greeks were essentially a nation of artists. Of the infinite attributes of God, of the infinite qualities of the whole, they clearly apprehended Beauty. *That* they conceived largely and liberally, not narrowly, as we are wont to do. And like consummate craftsmen, they did thoroughly whatsoever in the region of things plastic their hands found to do—so thoroughly that men have only done the work again in so far as they have followed the Greek rule. When we speak of the Greeks as an æsthetic nation, this is what we mean. Guided by no supernatural revelation, with no Mosaic law for conduct, they trusted their *αἴσθησις*, delicately trained and preserved in a condition of the utmost purity. This tact is the ultimate criterion in all matters of art—a truth which we recognize in our use of the word æsthetic, though we too often attempt to

import the alien elements of metaphysical dogmatism and moral prejudice into the sphere of beauty. This tact was also for the Greeks the ultimate criterion of ethics. Ὑγιαίνειν μὲν ἀριστον ἀνδρὶ θνατῷ, says Simonides.* A man in perfect health of mind and body, enjoying the balance of mental, moral, and physical qualities, which health implies, carried within himself the norm and measure of propriety. Those were the days when "love was an unerring light, and joy its own security." What we call the conscience, our continual reference to the standard of the Divine will, scarcely existed for the Greek. But instead of it he had for a guide this true artistic sensibility, developed by centuries of training, fortified by traditional canons of good taste and prudence, and subject to continual correction by reciprocal comparison and dialectical debate. The lawgiver, the sculptor, the athlete, the statesman, the philosopher, the poet, the warrior, the musician, each added something of his own to the formation of a κοινὴ αἴσθησις, or common taste, by which the individual might regulate his instincts.

To suppose that the Greeks were not a highly moralized race is perhaps the strangest misconception to which religious prejudice has ever given rise. If their morality was æsthetic and not theocratic, it was none the less on that account humane and real. The difficulty for the critic is to seize exactly that which is Hellenic—enduring and common to the race, not transient and due to individuals—in their religion and their ethics. In order to appreciate the first fine flavour of the Greek intellect it is necessary to go back to Homer, who represents a period when the instincts of the Hellenes had not been sophisticated by philosophical reflection or vitiated by contact with Asiatic luxury. Homer joins hands with Pheidias and Aristophanes and Sophocles in a chain of truly Greek

* See above, p. 131, for a translation of this Scolion attributed to Simonides.

tradition. But side by side with them there runs a deeper and more mystic strain. The blood-justice of the Eumenides, the asceticism of Pythagoras, the purificatory rites of Empedocles and Epimenides, the fetichistic belief in a jealous God, and the doctrine of hereditary guilt in Theognis, Herodotus, and Solon, are fragments of primitive or Asiatic superstition unharmonized with the serene element of the Hellenic spirit. At the same time the orgiastic cult of Dionysus, and the voluptuous worship of the Corinthian Aphrodite are intrusions from without. To eliminate such cruder moral and religious notions was the impulse of the vigorous Greek mind. Yet at one critical moment of history mysticism attained a Titanic development and bid fair to force the Hellenic genius into uncongenial regions. The Persian war, by its lesson of a mortal peril escaped miraculously, quickened the spiritual convictions of the race.* It was then that Æschylus produced his tragedy of *Retribution*, whereof the motto is τῷ δράσαντι παθεῖν, and Pindar sounded with an awful sense of mystery the possible abysses of a future life. Greece, after the struggle with Xerxes, passed through a period of feverish exaltation, in which her placid contemplation of the beauty of the world was interrupted. She, whose vocation it was to see only by the light of the serene and radiant sun, seemed on the verge of becoming a clairvoyante. But the balance was soon righted. Even in Pindar, moral

* I have already touched on this point at page 204. It is indeed very interesting to trace the growth of the morality of Nemesis and the Divine φθόνος in the earlier Greek authors, its purification by Æschylus and still further subsequent refinement by Sophocles, finally its rejection by Plato, who says emphatically : "Envy has no place in the heavenly choir." A childish fear of the divine government pervaded the Greeks of the age of Herodotus. This by the Dramatists was exalted to a conception of the holy and the jealous God. But the good sense of the Greeks led the philosophers to eliminate from their theory of the world even the sublime theosophy of Æschylus. The soul of man, as analyzed by Plato in the *Republic*, has only to suffer from the inevitable consequences of its own passions. Plato theorizes the humanity implicit in Homer.

mysticism is, as it were, encysted, like an alien deposit, in the more vital substance of æsthetic conceptions. Sophocles corrects the gloomy extravagance of Æschylus. The law of tragedy in Sophocles is no longer that the doer of a deed must suffer, but that he who offends unwittingly will be accounted innocent. Euripides shifts the ground of moral interest from religious beliefs to sophistical analysis. Meanwhile Aristophanes, the true Athenian conservative, is equally opposed to metaphysical subtleties and to superstitious fancies; while Socrates directs his polemic against sciolism in philosophy and childishness in mythology, without thinking it worth while to attack the *δαιμονία* of the mystics. In Plato's ethics the highest altitude of sane Greek speculation is attained. Aristophanes reflects the clearest image of Greek versatility and cheerfulness. Pericles, freed by Anaxagoras from foolish fears, realizes the genuine Greek life of cheerful, self-reliant activity. The drama of Sophocles sets forth a complete view of human destiny as conceived by the most perfect of Greek intellects. Antigone dares to trust her own *αἴσθησις* in opposition to unnatural law. Œdipus suffers no further than his own quality of rashness justifies. When we arrive at Aristotle, who yields the abstract of all that previously existed in the Greek mind, we see that the scientific spirit has achieved a perfect triumph. His science is the correlative in the region of pure thought to the Art which in Sculpture had pursued an uninterrupted course of natural evolution.

In the adolescent age of the Greek Genius, mankind, not having yet arrived at spiritual self-consciousness, was still as sinless and simple as any other race that lives and dies upon the globe, forming a part of the natural order of the world. The sensual impulses, like the intellectual and the moral, were then held void of crime and harmless. Health and good taste controlled the physical appetites of man, just as the appetites of animals are regulated by unerring instinct. In the same

way a standard of moderation determined moral virtue and intellectual excellence. But in addition to this protective check upon the passions, a noble sense of the beautiful, as that which is balanced and restrained within limits, prevented the Greeks of the best period from diverging into Asiatic extravagance of pleasure. Licence was reckoned barbarous, and the barbarians were slaves by nature, *φύσει δοῦλοι* : Hellenes, born to be free men, took pride in temperance. Their *σωφροσύνη*, coextensive as a protective virtue with the whole of their *τὸ καλόν*, was essentially Greek—the quality beloved by Phoebus, in whom was no dark place nor any flaw. With the Romans, humanity, not having yet transcended the merely natural order, remaining unconscious of a higher religious ideal, and at the same time uncontrolled by exquisite Greek sense of fitness, began to wax wanton. To the state of Paradisal innocence succeeded the Fall. The bestial side of our mixed nature encroached upon the spiritual, and the sense of beauty was perturbed by lust. That true health, without which the *αἴσθησις* is a false guide, failed ; no fine law of taste corrected appetite. It was at this moment that Christianity convicted mankind of sin. The voice of God was heard crying in the garden. The unity of man with nature was abruptly broken. Flesh and spirit were defined and counter-posed. Man, abiding far from God in his flesh, sought after God in his spirit. His union with God was no longer an actual state of mundane innocence, but a distant, future, dim, celestial possibility, to be achieved by the sacrifice of this fair life of earth. “Your lives are hid with Christ in God.” Together with this separation of the flesh and spirit wrought by Christianity, came the abhorrence of beauty as a snare, the sense that carnal affections were tainted with sin, the unwilling toleration of sexual love as a necessity, the idealization of celibacy and solitude. At the same time humanity acquired new faculties and wider sensibilities. A profounder and more vital feeling

of the mysteries of the Universe arose. Our life on earth was seen to be a thing by no means rounded in itself and perfect, but only one term of an infinite and unknown series. It was henceforward impossible to translate the world into the language of purely æsthetic form. This stirring of the spirit marks the transition of the ancient to the modern world.

At the time of the Renaissance the travail was well-nigh over ; the lesson had been learned ; mankind began to resent the one-sidedness of monastic Christianity, and to yearn once more for the fruit and flowers of the garden which was Greece. Yet the spirit and the flesh still remained in unreconciled antagonism. Over the gate of Eden the arm of the Seraph waved his terrible sword. But humanity in rebellion, while outcast from God and convicted of sin, would not refrain from plucking the pleasure of the sense. This was the time of the insolence of the flesh, when Antichrist sat in St. Peter's chair, and when man, knowing his nakedness, submitted to the fascinations of the siren, Shame. The old health of the Greeks was gone : to recover that was impossible. Christ crowned with thorns, the Sabbaths and ablutions of the Jews, the "thundrous vision" of St. Paul had intervened and fixed a gulf between Hellas and modern Europe. In that age the love of beauty became a tragic disease like the plague which Aphrodite sent in wrath on Phædra. Even Michael Angelo at the end of a long life spent in the service of the noblest art, remembering Savonarola, felt constrained to write :

"Now hath my life across a stormy sea,
 Like a frail bark, reached that wide port where all
 Are bidden ere the final judgment fall,
 Of good and evil deeds to pay the fee.
 Now know I well how that fond phantasy,
 Which made my soul the worshipper and thrall
 Of earthly art, is vain ; how criminal
 Is that which all men seek unwillingly.

Those amorous thoughts which were so lightly dressed,
What are they when the double death is nigh?
The one I know for sure, the other dread.
Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest
My soul, that turns to His great love on high,
Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread."

In his work Sculpture is forced to express what lies beyond its province—the throes and labour of the spirit. Michael Angelo was not a plastic character in the sense in which Hegel used this phrase. His art reflects the combat of his nature and his age; whence comes what people call its extravagance and emphasis. Raphael from the opposite side introduced Pagan form and feeling into his purely religious work of art; whence came what people call his decadence. Puritan England, Inquisition-ridden Spain, and critical Germany offer still more permanent signs of this deep-seated division in the modern world between the natural instincts and the spiritual aspirations of humanity. Even to the present day this division distorts our sense of beauty and prevents our realizing an ideal of art.

After all, the separation between the Greeks and us is due to something outside us rather than within—principally to the Hebraistic culture we receive in childhood. We are taught to think that one form of religion contains the whole truth, and that one way of feeling is right, to the exclusion of the humanities and sympathies of races no less beloved of God and no less kindred to ourselves than were the Jews. At the same time the literature of the Greeks has for the last three centuries formed the basis of our education; their thoughts and sentiments, enclosed like precious perfumes in sealed vases, spread themselves abroad and steep the soul in honey-sweet aromas. Some will always be found, under the conditions of this double culture, to whom Greece is a lost fatherland, and who, passing through youth with the *mal du pays* of that irrecoverable land upon them, may be compared to visionaries, spending the

nights in golden dreams and the days in common duties. Has then the modern man no method for making the Hellenic tradition vital instead of dream-like—invigorating instead of enervating? There is indeed this one way only—to be natural. We must imitate the Greeks, not by trying to reproduce their bygone modes of life and feeling, but by approximating to their free and fearless attitude of mind. While frankly recognising that much of their liberty would for us be licence, and that the moral progress of the race depends on holding with a firm grasp what the Greeks had hardly apprehended, we ought still to emulate their spirit by cheerfully accepting the world as we find it, acknowledging the value of each human impulse, and aiming after virtues that depend on self-regulation rather than on total abstinence and mortification. To do this in the midst of our conventionalities and prejudices, our interminglement of unproved expectations and unrefuted terrors, is no doubt hard. Yet if we fail of this, we lose the best the Greeks can teach us.

In the struggle of the adverse forces, felt so strongly ever since the reactionary age of the Renaissance, there is, however, now at least a hope of future reconciliation. A mediator may be confidently expected—even if he has not already appeared in Goethe, who, holding science in his right hand as a lamp, fearlessly explored the world, and lived a Greek life in the nineteenth century. The motto

“ Im Ganzen Guten Schönen
Resolut zu leben ”

is not a strictly Christian sentence. St. Paul had said: “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” But it is essentially human. The man who lives by it is restored to that place in the world which he has a right to occupy, instead of regarding himself as an alien and an outcast from imagined heaven. Science must be our redeemer. Science which

teaches man to know himself, and explains to him his real relation to Nature. Through scientific certainty God and the human conscience shall at last be reconciled, not in the merely paradisaal unity which the Greeks enjoyed, not in the spiritual union of an unrealized future promised by Christianity, but in a natural union. The healthy acceptance of the physical laws to which we are subordinated, need not prevent our full consciousness of moral law. It is true that the beautiful Greek life, as of leopards and tiger-lilies and eagles, cannot be restored. Yet neither need we cling to the convent or the prison life of early Catholicity. The new freedom of man must consist of submission to the order of the universe as it exists. The final discovery that there is no antagonism between our physical and spiritual constitution, but rather a most intimate connection, must place the men of the future upon a higher level and a firmer standing-ground than the Greeks. They by experience and demonstration will know what the Greeks felt instinctively. Their *αἴσθησις* will be fortified by the recognition of immutable Law. The tact of healthy youth will be succeeded by the calm reason of maturity.

APPENDIX.

SAPPHO'S HYMN TO APHRODITE.

See above, p. 140.

“ GLITTERING-THRONED, undying Aphrodite,
Wile-weaving daughter of high Zeus, I pray thee,
Tame not my soul with heavy woe, dread mistress,
Nay, nor with anguish !
But hither come, if ever erst of old time
Thou didst incline, and listenedst to my crying,
And from thy father's palace down descending,
Camest with golden
Chariot yoked : thee fair swift-flying sparrows
Over dark earth with multitudinous fluttering,
Pinion on pinion, thorough middle ether
Down from heaven hurried.
Quickly they came like light, and thou, blest lady,
Smiling with clear undying eyes didst ask me
What was the woe that troubled me, and wherefore
I had cried to thee :
What thing I longed for to appease my frantic
Soul ; and whom now must I persuade, thou askedst,
Whom must entangle to thy love, and who now,
Sappho, hath wronged thee ?
Yea, for if now he shun, he soon shall chase thee ;
Yea, if he take not gifts, he soon shall give them ;
Yea, if he love not, soon shall he begin to
Love thee, unwilling.
Come to me now too, and from tyrannous sorrow
Free me, and all things that my soul desires to
Have done, do for me, queen, and let thyself too
Be my great ally !

DESDEMONA'S DEATH.

IN the first edition of this book I had printed the words in the text, p. 288, thus : *dying by her husband's knife*. I have now altered the phrase because the manner of Desdemona's death is uncertain. Othello intended to put an end to her by smothering ; and he had certainly begun to execute this purpose with the pillow, when her struggles proved too terrible, and at the same time a knocking was heard at the door. He then exclaimed :

" I that am cruel am yet merciful ;
I would not have thee linger in thy pain :—
So, so ! "

At this point there is no new stage-direction to indicate that he used any other means to kill her but suffocation. Yet the fact that she afterwards regained sufficient breath to cry out,

" O falsely, falsely murdered ! "

seems to show that, if Shakspeare vividly conceived her death-scene, he meant Othello at the words *So, so !* to draw the dagger, with which he afterwards stabs himself, and to plunge it into Desdemona's breast ; since it is impossible that a woman, not otherwise injured, should so far recover from being stifled as to speak several lines articulately, and then die without further violence. The editors of the Variorum Shakspeare (1803, vol. xix. p. 500) call attention to this point, and quote the *Sic, sic* of Virgil's *Dido* : and it may be added that Retzsch, in the *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, represents Othello as stabbing Desdemona at the moment when the knocking is heard at the door. It is probable that he had seen it thus upon the stage : for it was the custom till lately so to play the last act of *Othello*. Against the theory here advanced, it may be urged that Othello's settled intention was to stifle, not to stab ; that his exclamation after the murder, Act V. Scene 2, line 205, accords with stifling better than stabbing ; and finally, that the impossibility of Desdemona's recovering her voice after stifling is no argument, seeing that to expect accuracy in such details, even from a poet so vivid in imagination as Shakspeare, is uncritical. I have thought the subject of sufficient interest to justify this lengthy and somewhat irrelevant note.

THEOCRITUS: IDYLL XXIX.

See above, p. 319.

“WINE, my boy, and truth—so runs the proverb :
Therefore in our cups we must be truthful ;
And what lies within my soul, I'll tell you.
Not with all your little heart you love me ;
Well I know, for half my life is hidden
In the thought of you, the rest is ruined.
When you smile, the days are bright above me
Like a god's ; you frown, and all is darkness.
Is it right your lover thus to torture ?
Listen to my words, for I am older ;
Heed, and you shall profit much, and praise me.
Make one nest upon one sheltering tree-top,
Where no savage beast may come and harm you :
Now upon this bough to-day you settle,
And next day on that, for ever flitting ;
Let but some one see and praise your beauty,
Straight you treat him to a three years' friendship,
And your old love is a friend of three days.
Yea, your haughtiness is more than human !
But I bid you seek the same man always ;
For if thus you live, you shall be revered
In the city ; yea, and Love shall bless you,
Love who tames the heart of whom it likes him,
Love who turned my steely soul to softness.
By this little mouth I kiss, I warn you
'Twas but yesterday you were a baby ;
And old age o'ertakes us in a twinkling,
Wrinkled age : yet no man may recapture
Youth, for youth hath wings upon his shoulder,
And our feet are slow to catch the flying.
This I bid you mind, and be more gentle,
And your lover recompense with loving ;
That, when manhood shades your cheek, together
We may live like Achilleian comrades.

But if to the winds you cast my warning,
Murmur in your heart—why will you plague me ?
Though this hour I'd fetch for you the golden
Apples, or drag Cerberus from Hades,
Then I'd let you call, nor stir to meet you
At the doorstep ; cured of tyrannous longing."

Welcome Library



